

Vote to Implement the 9/11 Commission's Recommendations

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Congressman Rothman Votes to Implement the 9/11 Commission's Recommendations

Highlights include 100% Inspection of Cargo and Risk-Based Homeland Security Grants

(Washington, DC)—Today, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) voted to implement the reforms recommended by the bipartisan 9/11 Commission, including improving homeland security, preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, and developing strategies for preventing the spread of Islamic terrorism. Notably, the legislation also goes beyond the 9/11 Commission's recommendations by requiring 100% scanning of U.S.-bound shipping containers over the next 5 years and mandates that the vast majority of state homeland security grants be provided on the basis of risk.

The House passed the bill (H.R.1) this afternoon by a vote of 299 to 128

Enhanced Port Security

"The security of the American people demands that we screen all foreign cargo for bombs, and chemical, biological, and nuclear material. Port Newark/Elizabeth in Northern New Jersey is one of the many seaports in our country that will benefit from the security improvements in today's bill. I look forward to the Senate's consideration and passage of this important legislation," said Rothman.

According to the port security provisions of this bill, containers must be scanned by both X-ray machines and radiation detectors. Large ports would be given three years to comply and smaller ports five years. Two of the busiest port terminals in the world - in Hong Kong - already scan 100% of cargo containers.

Risk-Based Homeland Security Grants

Last year, the 9/11 Commissioners gave an 'F' grade to the Administration and Congress because too many homeland security grants were disseminated with no consideration of risk. However, the 9/11 Commissioners have said that the grade will change to an 'A' if changes in today's bill become law. Specifically, H.R. 1 requires that a Department of Homeland Security risk assessment would determine each state's grant funding.

"Bluster from President Bush about patriotism and homeland security has always been the case, but the Administration has consistently failed to assign the dollars necessary to meet our homeland security needs. Quite frankly, the Administration has spent millions protecting low-risk areas like the cornfields of Iowa instead of focusing on the densely-populated areas we know are terrorist targets - such as Northern New Jersey. I am pleased that today's bill begins to fix that misguided policy," added Rothman.

Implementing the 9/11 Commission's Recommendations

In addition to 100% cargo screening and more risk-based homeland security grants, the bill includes the following long-overdue steps to substantially improve homeland security:

- Creating a stand-alone grant program to provide first responders with the type of equipment that allows them to communicate with one another during emergencies;

- Phasing in a requirement of 100% inspection of the cargo carried on passenger aircraft over the next three years (most of this cargo is still not inspected);

- Quickly accelerating the installation of explosive detection systems for checked baggage at the nation's airports; and

- Improving explosive detection systems at passenger checkpoints at the nation's airports.

The bill also includes provisions to better prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction (WMD), such as:

- Strengthening the Cooperative Threat Reduction program that focuses on securing loose nuclear materials in the former Soviet Union;

- Providing increased tools for the Proliferation Security Initiative, through which the U.S. and participating countries interdict WMD; and

- Establishing a U.S. Coordinator for the Prevention of WMD Proliferation and Terrorism at the White House, who would serve as a presidential advisor on proliferation issues.

Finally, the bill also includes provisions to reduce the appeal of extremism, including:

- Providing for the establishment of a Middle East Foundation, to promote economic opportunities, education reform, human rights and democratic processes in the countries of the Middle East; and

- Promoting quality educational opportunities for youth in Arab and other predominantly Muslim countries, including expanding U.S. scholarship and exchange programs.

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