

Another Dubai Ports World Deal from the President?

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(Washington, DC)— Today, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) voted against the President's \$94.5 billion emergency supplemental spending bill. He primarily opposed the legislation because it was designed to prop up the President's failed strategy in Iraq. However, he also objected to the fact that the Senate-House conferees, legislators from both houses who come together to compromise on differences, stripped provisions from the bill that would have prevented foreign ownership of U.S.-based airlines.

"When the Bush Administration sought to allow the United Arab Emirates to control operations at our ports, the American people said 'no'. Now, they should reject outside ownership of our airlines. Given the strategic importance of our domestic commercial aircraft to the U.S. military in an emergency, I believe that Congress should exercise all of its power to stop the President from allowing foreign ownership of our airlines," said Rothman.

During wartime, all airlines owned and controlled by U.S. citizens work closely with the Department of Defense to assist in large-scale military airlift operations. The large passenger aircraft used for international flights are able to quickly carry the most number of troops for the longest distance without fuel stops.

"Imagine what would happen if the United States lost control of those large aircraft," added Rothman. "We would be at the mercy of foreign owners who may or may not support our military operations and who may or may not be willing to help transport our troops during a time of war. It is a serious national security concern and I find it shocking that after all that this country has been through over the past five years to enhance our aviation security, the Administration is willing to hand over our military's largest reserve fleet to foreign owners."

Currently, U.S. citizens must own and control decisions at an airline in order for it to provide service between cities in the United States, or on international routes obtained by the U.S. through international agreements. "Through an administrative process known as rulemaking, the President's political appointees at the Department of Transportation (DOT) are set to undo 65 years of law and allow foreign control of our airlines - without any Congressional vote on the issue or major publicity about the change. That is outrageous and unacceptable," said Rothman.

Rothman supports legislation (H.R. 4542) to put an end to the President's plan and will continue to push for its passage. The bill has been referred to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

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