

Rothman, Pilots, Flight Attendants & machinists (IAMAW) Call for Increased Airline Security and Aid

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Rothman, Pilots, Flight Attendants & Machinists (IAMAW) Call for Increased Airline Security and Aid for Workers
Seek immediate passage of legislation to federalize security and to support workers

Newark, N.J -- Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ9) today gathered with airline pilots and flight attendants, including members of the International Associations of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW), at Newark International Airport to call on Congress to immediately approve legislation to strengthen and federalize airline security and provide much-needed relief to airline industry workers who have been directly affected by the September 11 terrorist attacks. "It is absolutely unacceptable that Congress has not passed any airline security legislation in the nearly seven weeks since terrorists hijacked our planes and turned them into guided missiles against our own people," Rothman said. "There are thousands of American citizens on planes right now, and we cannot honestly say to them that they are as safe as they can possibly be. We must restore the public's confidence in flying. The American people expect their government to provide them with security measures that will ensure their safety, and we have an immediate obligation to live up to that expectation."

Rothman, along with pilots and flight attendants of the IAMAW, urged Congress to pass legislation that would federalize security operations at our nation's airports, including passenger, luggage, and airport employee screening. Furthermore, Rothman called for the deployment of additional federal marshals on flights, and the reinforcement of cockpit doors to prevent intruders from taking over the controls of a plane.

"We don't privatize the FBI, Customs Service, or CIA because they're vital to our nation's security," Rothman said in explaining the need to federalize U.S. aviation security. "We don't have the luxury of waiting for the airline industry to update its security procedures and personnel. We need to act immediately and bring in federal security personnel."

Rothman and the IAMAW also called for several steps to help airline industry workers who were displaced as a direct result of the September 11 attacks. Rothman is the cosponsor of legislation that would extend unemployment benefits for laid off airline workers from 26 to 78 weeks, provide full reimbursement of COBRA premiums for health care benefits, and provide job training benefits to workers who are not expected to return their jobs.

"Congress helped the airline industry by passing a relief bill shortly after the September 11 attacks, so now it is time that we take care of the more than 100,000 airline industry workers who were laid off as a result of the lower number of flights," Rothman said. "These workers lost their jobs because terrorists hijacked planes, not because they were bad employees. It is our responsibility to ensure that out of work airline employees receive extended unemployment benefits, full reimbursement for health insurance, and assistance with job hunting while they try to get back on their feet. We cannot let terrorists ruin more lives than they already have."

On October 11, the U.S. Senate approved airline security legislation that is virtually identical to legislation that Rothman supports. Following the Senate vote, Rothman called upon Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert to move the legislation along, but no such vote has yet to take place.

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