

Rothman Calls on Speaker Hastert to Expediate Aviation Bill

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Measure would install new safety measures and give federal government jurisdiction

Washington, DC -- Just one day after the U.S. Senate unanimously approved legislation that would significantly strengthen airline security and put it under the jurisdiction of the federal government, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ9) today called upon Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert to expedite the passage of similar legislation in the House. "I applaud the United States Senate for its approval yesterday of a bill that we desperately need to increase airline security," Rothman said. "I urge Speaker Hastert not to make the House a roadblock in getting airline security legislation to the president's desk. The American people expect the United States Congress to provide them with security measures that will ensure their own safety, and we have an obligation to live up to that expectation."

"As the tragic events of September 11, 2001, made clear to us all, our commercial aviation system is vulnerable to being compromised in ways that pose a threat to the safety of passengers of planes as well as threat to our national security," Rothman wrote in a letter to Hastert. "While the Department of Transportation has improved flight security administratively, Congress should act legislatively to enhance the security of domestic flights against further attacks and greatly ease public concerns about flight safety."

As a cosponsor of H.R. 2951, Rothman urged Hastert to schedule a vote on the measure in the coming days. In addition to the federalization of airline security, the bipartisan bill would require reinforced cockpits to guard against potential intruders and the placing of air marshals aboard domestic flights.

"I am proud of the swift and bipartisan manner in which the United States Congress acted to give President Bush the authority to vigorously pursue the perpetrators of the attacks on New York City and the Pentagon as part of a sustained campaign against terrorism," Rothman wrote. "While the American people stand firmly behind President Bush in this campaign, they are also looking to Congress to safeguard the nation against further attacks from the sky."

Similar to the pending House measure, the Senate approved legislation gives control of airline security to the federal government. The bill also calls for all baggage to be X-rayed, the reinforcement of cockpit doors, criminal background checks on airport employees with access to restricted areas, and the expansion of the program that places U.S. marshals on planes.

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