

Homeland Security

As a nation, it is vital to protect America's from threats at home and abroad. Democrats are working to make sure that the federal government does more to support our police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel, by providing training and equipment needed to keep America safe and secure. We must also work to improve security at airports, seaports, rail tunnels, terminals, transit facilities, and other targets vulnerable to terrorists by taking a comprehensive, unified approach in protecting our nation.

On September 10, 2001, the most important issue facing the transportation community and the [Transportation and Infrastructure Committee](#), on which I sat, was capacity. In 2000, more than 1 in 4 of the 5.6 million flights scheduled by the major airlines was delayed, canceled or diverted, affecting approximately 163 million passengers.

In early and mid-2001, while the federal government and the airlines were focusing on easing congestion, al Qaeda terrorists were finalizing plans to commandeer four airliners and crash them into the World Trade Center and Washington, DC landmarks. This attack, as we all know, was tragically carried out on September 11, 2001.

Out of the rubble of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon emerged a renewed, if not new, national commitment to homeland security. A host of public policy issues, including capacity, were moved to the backburner as the full resources of the federal government were directed toward securing our aviation system and waging the war on terrorism. In the months that followed September 11th, for example, I joined with my colleagues on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to hammer out landmark aviation security legislation that has dramatically improved security at our nation's airports.

On August 10, 2006, British authorities arrested 24 individuals suspected of plotting to use liquid explosives to blow up 10 airliners destined for the United States. Law enforcement officials are to be commended for preventing this inhuman act. It reminds us of the ongoing challenge of keeping our nation safe and highlights the inadequacies of the administration's homeland security plans.

The Current State of Homeland Security

As the independent and bipartisan 9/11 Commission warned in 2004, we are far from providing real security to the American people. The Commission gave the Bush Administration grades of Ds and Fs for failing to implement homeland security safeguards. While dangerously distracted with its war in Iraq, the Bush Administration continued to ignore the warnings and recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, recommendations that include tougher airport security including proposals on screening liquids. In addition, a 2005 report from the Department of Homeland Security acknowledged that x-ray machines found at most airport security do not provide the information necessary to detect for explosives.

Unfortunately, the Bush Administration's misguided approach to improving national security continues to distract our country. The war in Iraq and repeated tax cuts during the Bush era have left many federal security programs underfunded. The Democratic Majority has worked hard to improve and increase funding for key homeland security concerns in the Fiscal Year 2009 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations bill. The bill rejected President Bush's proposal to cut \$2 billion from the homeland security grant programs that keep Americans safe, including assistance for State and local law enforcement and other emergency responders to prevent, prepare for, and respond to natural disasters, terrorist attacks, and other emergencies. Learn more about the [investments we've made in Homeland Security](#) .

In late July 2007, the House of Representatives and Senate sent H.R. 1, legislation implementing recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, to President Bush. The President signed the bill into law on August 3rd, 2007. This wide-ranging legislation will improve the allocation of Department of Homeland Security Grants, ensure communications interoperability for first responders, strengthen aviation security, strengthen cargo container security, improve information sharing between federal agencies, and protect civil liberties in the fight against terrorism, among many other changes to current security programs.

Even with the implementation of the 9/11 Commission recommendations, we must recognize that America's terrorist enemies are constantly changing and adapting their methods of attacks. We must never let up in our search for new technologies and ways to protect our homeland, for we know that those who wish America harm will never let up in their pursuits of violence and destruction. The failed Christmas Day 2009 terrorist attack showed us that our homeland security and intelligence communities must have the tools and policies in place to thwart these threats before they penetrate our borders. Protecting America from terrorist attacks must not be a partisan issue, and Democrats and Republicans alike must recognize that there is no issue more important than protecting the lives of our citizens.

With the election of President Obama, Congress has a friend in the White House whose highest

priority is keeping the American people safe while holding true to our values and ideals as a country. Democrats in Congress look forward to working with the President in securing the homeland against 21 st century threats by preventing terrorist attacks and other threats, preparing and planning for emergencies, and investing in strong response and recovery capabilities. Together, we will help ensure that the Federal Government works with states and local governments, and the private sector as close partners in a national approach to prevention, mitigation, and response.

Aviation Security

As a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Aviation, I was intimately involved in crafting the [Aviation and Transportation Security Act \(ATSA\)](#) following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. ATSA established the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and contained provisions establishing a federal screener workforce and requiring screening of checked baggage using explosive detection systems. In 2001, I also created a Blue Ribbon Task Force on Aviation Security and Technology. Comprised of Silicon Valley CEOs and executives, the Task Force explored and evaluated the use of cost-effective and sensible technologies to improve security throughout our aviation infrastructure. In the summer of 2002, the Task Force issued a report making recommendations for San Jose Airport and airports around the country. The TSA welcomed the report and implemented many of its recommendations.

Among many technical changes to aviation security, H.R. 1 requires the Secretary of Transportation to establish a system to inspect 100% of cargo transported on passenger aircraft. As many people have pointed out, inspecting the baggage of passengers but not the cargo traveling in the hold does not make sense and creates serious vulnerability to terrorist attack. The changes made in H.R. 1 will close a large hole in our aviation security network.