

□ 1015

AIRLINE ACCOUNTABILITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TURNER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. TURNER. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the CEO of United Airlines, Oscar Munoz, apologized to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure for his company having dragged a passenger off of one of their aircraft. Mr. Munoz highlighted the policy changes the airline has made since the wake of the incident.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Congress should hold the airlines accountable and ensure that the events like what happened to Dr. Dao are prevented.

When United Airlines had Dr. Dao forcibly removed on April 9, the airline more than just created a disruption for him and other passengers; it sparked a national outrage. Dr. Dao was bumped from his flight by a crew member of United in line with the then-airline's policies that crews could book seats on United flights until flights departed.

An airline's lack of preparation for its own staff's travel should not result in the disruption of the lives of its paying customers. Now crew members of United are required to make must-ride bookings at least 1 hour prior to departure, and they are not able to displace customers who are already on board.

However, today, I believe that we need to go further. This still has travelers at risk. So today, I am introducing the Hands Off Passengers Act or the HOP Act. This bill requires the Secretary of Transportation to modify a regulation regarding the involuntary deplaning or the denial of boarding of a flight by any passenger on an oversold flight merely to accommodate a member of the airline flight crew or staff. In other words, it prevents an airline from bumping ticketed passengers of an overbooked flight merely for the travel of one of the airline's crews.

Airlines should be better prepared on the movement of their crew to avoid the disruption of the lives of paying customers.

OMNIBUS SPENDING BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. ROSELEHTINEN). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. MITCHELL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MITCHELL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my disappointment that, yet again, Congress needs to resort to another omnibus spending bill. We are in a bind right now, finishing fiscal business that should have been completed last year, long before I came to Congress.

At this moment, the choice is stark and binary: We can vote to shut the government down, or we can vote for this massive funding bill. Neither is a good option, but shutting down the government is reckless. It would stall military pay and send a sign of weakness to the world. At a time when

North Korea is becoming increasingly aggressive, Europe is unstable, and Russia is posturing, we cannot afford to shut down.

I have always said, and I believe, that effective leadership needs to say what you mean and do what you say. If I voted "no" on this legislation, it would be disingenuous because I know a shutdown would be disastrous. This is a hard vote to take, but it is unavoidable at this point.

We must continue to pay our troops and other uniformed personnel. We must fund critical programs included in this omnibus. Certainly, the legislation is not perfect and doesn't accomplish everything I want as a conservative, but it does achieve some objectives. It cuts 150 Federal programs. It reduces the EPA bureaucracy to the lowest level since 1989.

The legislation also funds critical programs Republicans have been fighting for: It strengthens our military with an increase in defense spending, enabling the purchase of new warships, aircraft, and weapons. It provides a meaningful increase in salary to our uniform personnel. It provides additional funds to thwart the global war on terror and fight ISIS.

It is part of an overall \$1.52 billion increase in resources for border security, meaning more agents, enhanced technology, updated infrastructure to stem the flow of illegal aliens and drug activity across our border. It includes funds to fight the opioid epidemic, funding grants, treatment, and prevention efforts. It also provides increased funds for the National Institutes of Health to continue disease research that impacts every family.

For Michigan, important programs such as the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative are fully funded. It appropriates \$5.6 million to study the potential invasion of Asian carp into the Great Lakes.

While there are beneficial components in this omnibus, I want to underscore that using an omnibus is not how this body should function. We should be passing targeted, individual spending measures that address each agency, rather than a take-it-or-leave-it massive spending bill.

Going forward, we must change what has become business as usual in Washington. That is why I ran for Congress. There is no doubt, that won't be easy. I am learning every day how much our system needs significant reform. Only four times since 1977 were all appropriations enacted by the start of the fiscal year. That is four times in the last 40 years that the appropriations process has been effectively completed. Given that, it is unsurprising we find ourselves making this unfortunate choice yet again.

Madam Speaker, I stand here to say we can do better; we must do better. I urge this body to come together to address the shortcomings in our appropriations process and develop better solutions for the future. Given today's

options, I am voting to keep our government open, but we must end this series of short-term funding measures. We can do better. Our constituents deserve better.

OMNIBUS SPENDING BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. COMER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COMER. Madam Speaker, I rise to address the body about my position on the omnibus spending bill, which funds the government through September 30.

This spending bill does nothing to accomplish my mission to balance the Federal budget, today or any time in the future. I do not like the appropriation process and its lack of transparency in how we got to this point today. I do not like the lack of meaningful debate, nor do I like the inability to file floor amendments to the spending bill. It is inexcusable that Congress continues to wait until the last minute to perform its most important duty, which is to fund the government.

I am a freshman Member. I came to Congress to make a difference. I represent the good people of the First Congressional District of Kentucky, not a political party or any special interest. I will always put my people's best interests above politics. My objective is to fight hard for what I believe is the best for my district and then form a consensus to get things done.

Madam Speaker, I understand that I am 1 of 435 Members of the U.S. House of Representatives. And as I always mention in speeches back home in Kentucky, this is a very diverse body, diverse in ideology, diverse in geography. We all have different ideas, objectives, and goals. I respect this institution and the Constitution.

In the 5 months I have been here, I have advocated for a balanced budget and term limits; and I will continue to fight to see that those two items of my agenda become law.

I have also worked hard to see that some badly needed projects in my district receive funding. I am proud to say that the following projects are funded in this bill: \$270 million for the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant deactivation process, which will keep 1,200 West Kentuckians working in good-paying jobs and continue to prevent illness and environmental issues in McCracken and Ballard Counties.

I am proud to represent Fort Campbell. The bill provides a pay increase for our troops and fully funds health and benefits for them and their families while providing the funding to begin rebuilding our military; language to redesignate the Pennyryle Parkway as I-169 from south of Madisonville to Hopkinsville; funding for much-needed dredging of the Hickman-Fulton Riverport, which is located just off the Mississippi River; language which prohibits the Army Corps of Engineers