

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is the newest cabinet department in the United States federal government and was created in 2002 in the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks. The department's mission is to prevent, prepare for, and respond to domestic issues, and it is deeply involved in border security and immigration services. In many ways, the DHS is still a fledgling cabinet department and H.R. 4567 aims to ensure transparency and accountability in this law enforcement body, and to encourage interagency communication and collaboration in their shared mission to fight terrorism abroad.

As a federal law enforcement agency, it's important to establish oversight rules for the DHS. Government oversight is one of the pillars of the American democracy and is a vital part of promoting accountability among the powerful. This is even truer of personnel in countries outside of the United States, where agents can be operating far from a supervisor's watchful eye.

We, as one of the most powerful nations in the world, must police our international presence to prevent abuses of power. As a former member of the Armed Services committee, I have long been a supporter of ethical practices and even sponsored legislation to review the United States treatment of suspected "unlawful enemy combatants". In our fight against terror worldwide, it's important to make sure that we ourselves are upholding the inalienable rights our democracy is founded upon.

H.R. 4567 encourages communication and accountability within the DHS, and allows for transparency between this department and the legislative branch. I support H.R. 4567 and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

ORANGE PARK ACRES

HON. MIMI WALTERS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 12, 2018

Mrs. MIMI WALTERS of California. Mr. Speaker, It is my honor to rise today in recognition of Orange Park Acres, a beautiful rural community located in my district in Orange County, California.

This community has stood the test of time, and stands today as a living reminder of our county's humble beginnings of horse drawn buggies, dirt roads, and miles of pristine natural landscape.

Orange Park Acres serves many Orange County residents as a retreat from the noise and congestion of city life, offering miles of quiet trails to enjoy with family and friends in our own backyard.

This year, Mr. Speaker, Orange Park Acres will celebrate 90 years since its establishment.

Through the dedication of the community members who call this hidden gem home, I am confident that Orange Park Acres will enjoy many more years of prosperity to come.

Once again, I would like to wish the community of Orange Park Acres a Happy New Year filled with celebrations and pride over the many accomplishments of the past 90 years.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. SALUD O. CARBAJAL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 12, 2018

Mr. CARBAJAL. Mr. Speaker, deadly mudslides have destroyed homes and claimed at least seventeen lives in my district. These mudslides have devastated the communities in my district—many of which are still recovering from the horrific Thomas Fire. In order to be with my constituents and assist the community in recovery efforts, I decided to return to Santa Barbara, California.

As a result, I was unable to vote during Roll Call No. 16, which was S. 139, the FISA Amendments Reauthorization Act of 2017 on January 11, 2018. If I had the opportunity to vote on S. 139, I would have voted No.

I was also a co-sponsor of the Amash amendment to S. 139 and would have voted Aye on Roll Call No. 14, in support of the amendment. Additionally, I would have voted Aye on Roll Call No. 15, on the Motion to Recommit on S. 139.

DOMESTIC EXPLOSIVES DETECTION CANINE CAPACITY BUILDING ACT OF 2017

SPEECH OF

HON. HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 9, 2018

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support H.R. 4577, the Domestic Explosives Detection Canine Capacity Building Act of 2017.

This legislation directs the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to create a work group to explore best practices for developing a breeding and training program for explosive detection canines. This working group would also determine medical standards, behavioral standards, and training standards for the program.

Currently in the United States, we rely heavily on explosive detection canines. They are a vital part of security measures not only at airports, but locations across the United States and the world. The sensitivity, complexity, and astuteness of a Bomb-sniffing dog's nose simply cannot be replicated with modern technology, and they are some of our best assets in the fight to protect Americans from acts of terror.

Previously, the TSA oversaw a breeding program to train and produce top quality service canines; however, that program was cut from the budget in 2012. This has forced the agency to purchase lower quality canines abroad at exorbitant prices. In 2017, the TSA oversaw a work force of 1,000 dogs and would need to acquire 350 annually to maintain these numbers. A New York Times article detailing the problem noted that in one of the four trips TSA agents annually make less than half of the 110 dogs they might see pass preliminary screening requirements, and another 15 to 20 percent fail to complete the agency's training program. To put it blandly, we are buying the best dogs our money can buy, and they're not good enough. H.R. 4577 is the first step to rebuilding the TSA's breeding program and ensuring that the dogs protecting our nation's airports and travelers satisfy our standards of excellence. This legislation will allow experts to not only determine which breeds are best suited for the job, but also which training methods are most effective.

I am particularly concerned with this issue, because Georgia houses the busiest airport in the world. Atlanta's Hartsfield Jackson airport in January of 2017 alone was visited by over 7.5 million passengers and played host to over 70,000 different aircrafts. Canines are widely used in the daily operations of this airport and a critical part of safety operations.

Additionally, as a member of the Transportation & Infrastructure committee, and a former member of the Armed Services committee I have long been concerned with issues relating to airport security and the safety of passengers who travel through our country. The TSA is an agency filled with people who have dedicated their careers to protecting Americans and we must provide them with the best tools available to do so. Explosive detecting canines are a crucial piece of the front line protecting Americans from harm and a necessary part of ensuring that all passengers and aircrafts are protected from any threat. H.R. 4577 will ensure that the United States can develop a program that will produce explosive detection canines that meet our standards of excellence and will build a sustainable method for ensuring the program's permanence. I support this legislation and I urge my colleagues to do the same.