Mr. SHELBY. I would like, first, to modify my unanimous consent request. I think it might be best that I restate it, if I may.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Go right ahead.

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Chair lay before the Senate H.R. 2084, the House-passed fiscal year 2000 Transportation appropriations bill, that all after the enacting clause be stricken and the text of S. 1143, as modified by striking section 321, be inserted in lieu thereof—being amendment No. 1624—that the amendment be considered as original text for the purpose of further amendment, and that points of order against any provision added thereby are preserved.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. CHAFEE. A question, if I might.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. CHAFEE. Mr. President, it is my understanding that this is the language that has been worked out with our side.

Mr. SHELBY. That is exactly right.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The text of amendment No. 1624 is printed in today's RECORD under ''Amendments Submitted.'')

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative assistant read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2084) making appropriations for the Department of Transportation and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes.

The Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, just for a few minutes I would like to address some of the overview, as I see it, of this Transportation appropriations bill.

Mr. President, after being delayed by the objection to the Transit Equity Provision, I am pleased that the Senate will finally have the opportunity to consider the fiscal year 2000 transportation appropriations bill. Although the subcommittee's funding allocation is tight, I believe we are presenting the Senate with a balanced approach to meeting our Nation's transportation needs by providing adequate funding for all modes of transportation.

At the same time, the senior Senator from New Jersey, Mr. LAUTENBERG, and I have gone to great lengths to craft a bill that I believe accommodates the requests of Members and funds their priorities.

The current fiscal constraints were especially felt in the transit account, where demand for mass transit systems is growing in every State. But funding is fixed by the TEA 21 firewall. My proposal for managing an account in which Members' requests were more than 20 times the available funds was the Transit Equity Provision.

This measure, which I included in the original subcommittee mark of the bill, would have limited the amount of transit capital funds any single State could receive in fiscal year 2000 to no more than 12½ percent of the total.

The two states that receive the lion's share of national transit funds—30 percent of the total in fiscal year 1999—are California and New York.

The provision would have redistributed any transit capital funds appropriated to these two states in excess of 12½ percent to the remaining 48 states. This would have resulted in approximately $5 million more for every other state, for their own transit programs—while New York and California would still have received more than $693 million each.

Last Thursday, however, the Senate failed to reach cloture on the motion to proceed to the transportation appropriations bill if it included the Transit Equity Provision, and I have agreed to strip the provision from the bill in order to move this legislation forward.

The equity provision is not central to the appropriations bill. The total program funding levels, which are set at the TEA–21 firewall limits, remain unchanged. I included the provision to help create more room within those totals for the national transit program.

My colleagues have written to me with new start project requests totaling $2.84 billion and with bus project requests totaling $1.8 billion.

If the appropriations bill honors all the current and anticipated full funding grant agreement projects and the bus earmarks for fiscal year 2000 that were included in the TEA–21 authorization, we have left only $96 million in new starts funding and $235 million in bus funding—to accommodate not only the billions of dollars' worth of requests from my colleagues in the Senate, but also the earmarks that have been included in the House transportation appropriations bill.

This task is beyond challenging: It is impossible. There is no way to begin to satisfy the demand for discretionary transit capital funds. I do not want this fact to catch my colleagues by surprise.

I bring this bill to the Senate floor today without the Transit Equity Provision. By engaging in a lengthy and public debate on this issue, as well as a recorded cloture vote, I hope that my colleagues are now more aware of the pressures on this account nationally, and that they better understand why I have so actively sought a way to provide funds for what I thought were my colleagues' transit priorities.

The bill honors our commitment to increase the flow of federal funds for construction to improve infrastructure throughout the nation.

Within the framework of a $49.5 billion total bill, $37.9 billion is provided for infrastructure investment in highways, transit systems, airports, and railroads. This is 6 percent more than last year's level of funding and is greater than the administration's request.

This bill respects the Highway and Transit firewalls that TEA–21 imposed. I would like to point out to my colleagues that we adhered strictly to the TEA–21 firewalls, even though outlays will be greater than the amount anticipated when Congress enacted TEA–21.

By providing the funds above the firewall level, there were fewer dollars available to fund other priorities within the subcommittee's jurisdiction, including the Coast Guard and FAA.

I believe this illustrates the pitfalls of trying to manage annual outlays in multi-year authorization legislation and is one of many reasons the Senate should reject a proposal to establish more budgetary firewalls around trust fund accounts.

I yield to my colleague under the unanimous consent agreement, the senior senator from New Jersey, the ranking member of the Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey is recognized.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, first, I thank my colleague and friend, Senator SHELBY, for having managed a very difficult problem with, frankly, less money than the amount we think transportation in this country deserves. We are entering a new century. It is hoped that we are going to be able to continue the prosperous and vigorous economy we now see. I think if there is one place where our funding allocations are deficient—and I believe they are deficient in many—transportation heads the list. It is necessary to have the kind of infrastructure that will propel us into continuing leadership in the 21st century, starting with transportation.

We see crowding in every mode of transportation—aviation; the skies are jammed. The highways are congested. They are spewing contaminated air all over the place, and our transit systems are operating well above capacity. So I approach this bill with less than total satisfaction because we, frankly, could have used more funds. I will discuss those for a minute.

I have served on the Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee for more than 14 years. As they say, time flies when you are having fun. I chaired the subcommittee for 8 years, and I have also had the pleasure of serving under other subcommittee chairmen including Mark Andrews, Mark Hatfield, who was a dear friend and inspired leader, and, most recently, RICHARD SHELBY.

Senator SHELBY, as his predecessors, has been attentive to the issues. He has consulted carefully with the minority members of the subcommittee. When it comes to funding levels included in this bill, Senator SHELBY has done the best he could, given the very limited resources allocated to this subcommittee. And though I wish we had more money, I am supporting this bill,

even with the limitations placed upon us, because of the efforts by Senator SHELBY.

When you consider the fact that this appropriations bill is going to usher in our national transportation agenda in the next century, it is clear that we are still not making the kind of investments we have to make to ensure continued leadership, economically and functionally, in the next millennium.

That is not the fault of the chairman. Rather, it is the fault of our overall budgeting process—and I say that both as the ranking member of this subcommittee and the ranking member of the Budget Committee.

The bill before us is almost $700 million below the level requested by the President in his budget.

The President's proposed transportation budget for fiscal year 2000, for the first time, exceeds $50 billion. This bill, however, is funded at less than $49.5 billion.

While the dollar amount in this bill does exceed the total provided for in fiscal year 1999, the growth is to be found in the highway and transit programs that enjoy firewalled funding under TEA–21.

The funding provided in this bill for other modal transportation which do not benefit from funding guarantees is severe. Funding for the Coast Guard is well below the President's request. Fortunately, we were able to include funding for the Coast Guard in the Kosovo supplemental appropriations bill. These funds will remain available and enable the Coast Guard to better meet its needs next year.

Funding for the Federal Aviation Administration is more than 6.5 percent below the President's request.

Funding for Amtrak: We are now approaching a time when Amtrak is about to step in, hopefully, to the 21st century, but it is at least starting to catch up in the 20th century even as we leave it. High-speed rail is around the corner—delayed, unfortunately, a little bit more than we expected it to be. But it is on its way. It is going to make an enormous difference. By way of example, if we didn't have the investment in Amtrak's Northeast Corridor to keep it going, we would need, as a substitute, 10,000 flights every year—10,000 new flights between the Boston area and the Washington area, including New York. That would be something beyond comprehension in terms of the crowded skies—200 new flights a week.

Funding for the critical highway safety functions, or the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, is cut by more than $50 million, or 15 percent below the level requested by the administration. A large part of the problem is that, when we marked up appropriations bill in May, we were capped by the low authorization levels in TEA–21. Since that markup, the House and the Senate passed, and the President signed, a sizable increase in these authorization levels for highway safety. But now that the authorization levels have been increased, there is no funding in the subcommittee's allocation to fund even part of them.

These are difficult funding cuts. But despite these cuts, I support this bill. Frankly, I am putting some hope in the fact that the bill as passed by the House of Representatives had an allocation that was more than $0.5 billion larger than the allocation granted to the Senate Transportation Subcommittee.

As we approach conference on this bill, I expect to work closely with Chairman SHELBY and the chairman of the Appropriations Committee with the goal of bringing back a transportation conference report that better meets the needs of the FAA, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the Coast Guard, and the other critical functions of the Department of Transportation.

Mr. President, I emphasize once more that the reason this bill is so tight is not because Chairman SHELBY doesn't want to fund the necessary parts of the transportation bill's requirements but, rather, we are caught by the funding caps that have controlled the Appropriations process.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

AMENDMENT NO. 1625

(Purpose: To make available funds for the investigation of unfair or deceptive practices and unfair methods of competition by air carriers, foreign air carriers, and ticket agents involving the failure to disclose information on the overbooking flights)

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) for himself, Mr. LAUTENBERG, and Mr. SHELBY, proposes an amendment numbered 1625.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

On page 65, line 22, before the period at the end of the line, insert the following: '': *Provided,* That the funds made available under this heading shall be used to investigate pursuant to section 41712 of title 49, United States Code, relating to unfair or deceptive practices and unfair methods of competition by air carriers, foreign air carriers, and ticket agents: *Provided further,* That, for purposes of the preceding proviso, the terms 'unfair or deceptive practices' and 'unfair methods of competition' include the failure to disclose to a passenger or a ticket agent whether the flight on which the passenger is ticketed or has requested to purchase a ticket is overbooked, unless the Secretary certifies such disclosure by a carrier is technologically infeasible''.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, first I express my thanks to the bipartisan leadership of the committee, Chairman SHELBY, who has been extraordinarily helpful on this matter, which is a critical issue of protecting the rights of airline passengers in this country, and I also thank my longtime friend, Senator LAUTENBERG, who has spent a great deal of time with me on this issue over the last few months. The bipartisan leadership of this committee stands out in the Congress in terms of trying to ensure that airline passengers get a fair shake. It is high time, Mr. President, and colleagues.

Last year, we saw an unprecedented increase in the number of complaints by airline passengers about shoddy service. In the first 6 months of this year, we have seen another unprecedented increase in complaints by passengers of airline service.

This is the first of two amendments I intend to offer with the chairman of the subcommittee, Mr. SHELBY, and the ranking minority member, Mr. LAUTENBERG, to try to balance the scales and ensure that the passengers get a fair shake and, in particular, get information about key services, such as the lowest fare, and accurately be told when a flight is overbooked.

I emphasize to my colleagues that I am not proposing the Congress establish a constitutional right to a fluffy pillow on an airplane flight or a jumbo bag of peanuts. But I think airline passengers have a right to timely and accurate information.

The purchase of an airline ticket today in America is like virtually no movie choice. Unlike movie theaters that sell tickets to a movie or a store that sells soccer balls, the airline industry provides no real assurance that they will be able to use the product as intended. They have made a variety of voluntary pledges to try to turn around this situation. But what we have seen in the last few days as a result of a study by the GAO and a study by the Congressional Research Service is that these voluntary pledges by the airline industry aren't worth much more than the paper they are written on.

I am very pleased to offer this first amendment to try to ensure that passengers can be informed when an airline is overbooked.

Again, I thank the bipartisan leadership of the committee. In addition to Senators SHELBY and LAUTENBERG, Senators CAMPBELL and FEINGOLD have also been supportive in finally holding these airlines accountable with respect to making sure passengers are informed when a flight is overbooked. That is the problem today in America with overbooking. If you call an airline right now and they are overbooked, they won't tell you that before they sell you a ticket. The public has a right to know. The passengers have a right to know. These voluntary pledges aren't going to do it.

For example, the voluntary pledge the airline industry has made on overbooking is, and I quote:

They will disclose to passengers upon request whether the flight on which the passenger is ticketed is overbooked if within the usual and ordinary scope of such employee's work, the information is available to the airline employee to whom the request is made. -

In plain English, that means if you are lucky and happen to ask the right employee you may get a straight answer on overbooking.

In plain English, that means if you are lucky and happen to ask the right employee you may get a straight answer on overbooking.

This bipartisan amendment says the Department of Transportation inspector general can and should investigate as a deceptive trade practice the failure to inform the consumer when a flight is overbooked. In 1997, the Department of Transportation reported the airlines bumped more than 1 million passengers. Since that time, more than 100,000 passengers have been bumped involuntarily. This means more than 100,000 passengers are paying for seats they never sat in.

I think it is time to make sure the public's right to know is protected. This first bipartisan amendment gives Members that opportunity.

My thanks to my senior colleague, the chairman, and the ranking minority member. I urge the Senate to adopt this amendment.

I yield the floor.

Mr. SHELBY. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative assistant proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I commend our colleague for this amendment and for the substance of the amendment.

There has been constant pressure on the airlines to provide seats and make accommodations available. For those who think they are going on a journey—some emergencies, some recreational, some for routine work—it matters not. The fact of the matter is, when someone makes a reservation on an airplane, they ought to know whether or not there is a pretty good chance they will arrive at their chosen destination. We know there is not a way to positively predict this. However, the passengers who have paid for their tickets should have a pretty good chance of arriving when the flight is scheduled to arrive.

I think this is positive amendment. It is pretty simple. The Senator from Oregon deals with the problem of airlines continuing to sell tickets on oversold flights and refusing to divulge that fact to their customers.

I consider myself a friend of aviation. I have worked very hard with the FAA and the airlines to make sure we offer reliable and safe service. With all of the crowding, our system is still remarkably safe. It handles far more flights than we ever expected. Are we up to date in everything we can do? I say absolutely not; the requirements far exceed the capacity.

The least we ought to do is tell passengers if there is a reasonable chance that they will get to their destination. The person who travels from Cincinnati to New York, perhaps to catch a flight overseas, arrives with their baggage. They have a 2-hour connection or an hour-and-a-half at Kennedy or Newark Airport on their way to Rome. The only problem is, they arrive 3 or 4 hours later because they were bumped off the flight and they miss their flight to Rome.

I had an experience a couple of weeks ago. This is probably a good story for democracy. I got to the airport, and they said the flight was sold out. I had made a reservation, given a credit card number. I arrived at the airport, and they said the airplane was filled. I got there 15, 20 minutes before flight time. I said: What do you mean, it is filled? They said: Yes, that seat is sold. I said: The seat was sold twice, and the first one who got there got it.

No one told me the rules, that a passenger had to beat the other guy to the starting line to guarantee the seat for which they paid.

Needless to say, I was a little annoyed. I didn't jump over the counter and threaten anybody, but it was not a pleasant experience. Instead of taking one direct flight back home, I had to take two—first flying north before I could fly south. All I could get was, ''Sorry, we sold the seat.'' It is an unpleasant experience.

When they took the reservation which I made personally and gave my credit card number, they said fine and gave me a confirmation number. When I got to the gate to get on this airplane, the clerk behind the desk said: This airplane has been sold out. But they took my money anyway.

The Senator from Oregon is standing behind the passenger who is not getting a lot of attention these days. The airlines handle a lot more traffic than they expected. They are also making a lot more money and I'm glad that they are. But they must also provide the service in a manner that is respectful of their passengers.

What the Senator from Oregon is asking for is simple: If you are going to sell a ticket to him, to me, to anybody, please tell them if the flight is oversold. Then passengers can plan for it or figure out a backup instead of being innocently led to a blind wall where they can't go farther.

So I support this amendment. I support it enthusiastically.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

AMENDMENT NO. 1626

(Purpose: To make available funds for the investigation of unfair or deceptive practices and unfair methods of competition by air carriers and foreign air carriers involving denying airline consumers access to information on the lowest fare available)

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and send another amendment to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Oregon [Mr. WYDEN], for himself, Mr. LAUTENBERG, and Mr. SHELBY, proposes an amendment numbered 1626.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

On page 65, line 22, before the period at the end of the line, insert the following: '': *Provided*, That the funds made available under this heading shall be used (1) to investigate pursuant to section 41712 of title 49, United States Code, relating to unfair or deceptive practices and unfair methods of competition by air carriers and foreign air carriers, (2) for monitoring by the Inspector General of the compliance of air carriers and foreign carriers with respect to paragraph (1) of this proviso, and (3) for the submission to the appropriate committees of Congress by the Inspector General, not later than July 15, 2000, of a report on the extent to which actual or potential barriers exist to consumer access to comparative price and service information from independent sources on the purchase of passenger air transportation: *Provided further*, That, for purposes of the preceding proviso, the terms 'unfair or deceptive practices' and 'unfair methods of competition' mean the offering for sale to the public for any route, class, and time of service through any technology or means of communication a fare that is different than that offered through other technology or means of communication''.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, this amendment I also offer with the bipartisan leadership of the subcommittee, Chairman SHELBY and Senator LAUTENBERG. Again, I express my thanks to both of them. As you could tell from Senator LAUTENBERG's excellent statement, he has strong views on this matter. They go back a long time.

One of the areas I most admire about Senator LAUTENBERG has been his extraordinary work on tobacco control. The fact of the matter is, Senator LAUTENBERG for years led that effort to make air flights healthier in our country. That is just one of the many contributions he has made in public service. We thank him for it.

This amendment as well is supported by the chairman of the subcommittee, Chairman SHELBY, and the ranking minority member, Senator LAUTENBERG. As I have sought to do with respect to overbooking, again this amendment would ensure there were teeth behind this so-called pledge by the airlines to make information about the lowest possible fare available to the consumer. Finding the lowest air fare in America is now one of the great mysteries of Western life.

On any given flight there may be as many different fares as there are passengers on the plane. One of the things that experts in aviation have said for some time is if you want to start a brawl on an air flight, ask the passengers to compare notes with respect to how much they paid for a ticket because there will be remarkable differences, even among people who made the same sort of arrangements to fly.

The purpose of this bipartisan amendment is to make sure, no matter

how a customer contacts an airline—at the ticket counter, over the telephone, or at an airline's web site—the customer would get the same information about the lowest fare. Again, the airlines in these voluntary pledges that they have made have a lot of lofty rhetoric about telling the consumer about the lowest fare, but the harsh reality is that it is business as usual. This amendment would hold the airlines accountable to their pledge to actually make available to the consumer, in an understandable way, information about the lowest fare available.

The pledge to offer the lowest fare available as it stands now, in the voluntary package from the airline industry, is, again, sort of more hocus-pocus, as far as the consumer is concerned. In effect, what the airlines are now saying is that if a consumer uses the phone to call an airline and asks about a specific flight on a specific date in a specific class, the airline will tell the consumer the lowest fare, as they are already required to do by law. Not only will the airlines not provide the consumer relevant information about lower fares on other flights on the same airline, they will not even tell the consumer about lower fares that are probably on the airline's web page—and for obvious reasons. Once they have you on the phone and they can get you at a higher price, they might not be so interested in letting you know about something else that is available on the web page.

Recently a Delta agent quoted a consumer over the telephone a round trip fare to Portland, my hometown, of $400, and 5 minutes later the consumer found a price of $218 for the exact same flight on Delta's web page.

What this amendment stipulates, again, as with the bipartisan effort with respect to overbooking, is that the passenger has a right to know. The public has a right to know. We are not setting up any new Government agencies. We are not calling for some micromanaged, run-from-Washington kind of operation. We are saying the passenger deserves a fair shake with respect to accurate information on the lowest fares that are available.

So this amendment, that I am proud to offer again with the chairman of the subcommittee, Chairman SHELBY, and Senator LAUTENBERG, would stipulate the Department of Transportation could investigate as a deceptive trade practice the failure on the part of an airline to tell the passenger the lowest fare that is available, no matter how the customer contacts the airline. Under the voluntary pledge, again, the airlines are going to be in a position to withhold information about the lowest fares from customers, information that they have, as Senator LAUTENBERG noted in his previous statement, and information that ought to be supplied to the consumer so the consumer can make accurate choices.

All we are talking about in both of these amendments is access to information, full disclosure, the public's right to know. But the failure to do it, the failure to inform the consumer, ought to be treated seriously by this Congress.

These two amendments provide that opportunity to do so by saying the Department of Transportation can investigate as a deceptive trade practice the failure to inform the public, in this case of the lowest fare available, in the previous case information about overbooking.

I know time is short and there is much to do with respect to this important legislation. I thank Senator SHELBY and Senator LAUTENBERG for their support. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who seeks recognition?

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWNBACK). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. I thank the Presiding Officer.

CONGESTION AND DELAYS IN AIR TRAFFIC SYSTEM

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, there is a very famous line that we all know from the heroic astronauts of *Apollo 13*. The line is: ''Houston, we have a problem.''

Today, many of us who have spent the August recess traveling to our home States and various places across the country also realize that we ''have a problem'' in the air. This problem is not only in Houston, it is in Atlanta, it is in Chicago, it is in Cleveland, it is in Detroit and in nearly every other city across the country.

Over the last month, there have been very troubling reports of unprecedented increases in congestion and delays in our national air traffic system—long hours of delay. I have not heard a speech in this Chamber about this in the last several months. We spent most of yesterday having, I guess, basically a political debate about the Puerto Rican clemency situation, but this is urgent in a very different way because it involves life and death, the national economy, and congestion which is beyond the scope of thinking of many of our fellow citizens.

We are not talking about merely an inconvenience. We are talking about a potential crippling of the national economy and, if ignored, we are talking about extremely serious safety issues.

I happen to be an admirer of FAA Administrator Jane Garvey. I think she is very good, and I think she is tough. She ran an airport in Boston. That is a tough thing to do. I have a lot of confidence and faith in her. She canceled her own summer vacation plans because the crisis was so bad. She stayed in Washington to work with the controllers and with the airlines on this enormous congestion problem on which I will elaborate in a minute.

Beginning in mid-July, the FAA and the carriers conducted an on-the-spot evaluation of about 33 different facilities across the country in the air traffic control system. That is the one which routes our planes hither and yon; they better be right.

In this evaluation, they came up with a short-term plan for reducing delays and for improving some inconveniences. It is really too soon to say how effective it will be. I am glad they did it, but we cannot draw any final conclusions from it.

Everybody involved with the plan seems to agree that these short-term fixes are nothing more than that—short-term fixes. They are meant to address symptoms of an underlying problem which we in Congress consistently fail to address, which is an air traffic control system that must be modernized—but we will not do it, nor put up the money for it—restructuring within the FAA and other areas in order to meet surging travel demands and remain viable, as they say, into the next century.

Of course, while this serious problem-solving effort was going on at the FAA and its facilities during this summer, we in the Congress, and especially we in the Senate, have largely or virtually—totally, I should say—stood by. We have watched. We have not even commented. We have simply watched or in some cases even looked the other way. Lack of concern? Too complicated? I do not know.

We continue in this same vein that we have approached aviation for more than a year now, ignoring the problem, ignoring the cost, ignoring the solutions, ignoring the complexity, by avoiding the issue and refusing to make the time to debate it in a serious way.

We left for the August recess without even bringing up FAA reauthorization or the airport improvement program reauthorization. That is our most basic aviation responsibility. That is our bottom line. We failed to do it. In fact, we all went home knowing that the airport funding program was going to lapse. And, of course, on August 6 it did.

Some would have you believe that the FAA reauthorization bill is so mired in controversy that we just cannot do it—not a matter of not wanting to do it; we cannot do it. I am here to tell you—and to implore you—that most of the bill is entirely resolved and that the remaining issues require only some healthy debate, a measure of compromise; and if we will only make the time, we can certainly get all of this done and need to this month.