

the needs of survivors and family members following an accident.

“(15) An assurance that, upon request of the family of a passenger, the rail passenger carrier will inform the family of whether the passenger’s name appeared on any preliminary passenger manifest for the train involved in the accident.

“(c) LIMITATION ON LIABILITY.—A rail passenger carrier shall not be liable for damages in any action brought in a Federal or State court arising out of the performance of the rail passenger carrier in preparing or providing a passenger list, or in providing information concerning a train reservation, pursuant to a plan submitted by the rail passenger carrier under subsection (b), unless such liability was caused by conduct of the rail passenger carrier which was grossly negligent or which constituted intentional misconduct.

“(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

“(1) the terms ‘rail passenger accident’ and ‘rail passenger carrier’ have the meanings such terms have in section 1137 of this title; and

“(2) the term ‘passenger’ means a person aboard a rail passenger carrier’s train that is involved in a rail passenger accident.

“(e) LIMITATION ON STATUTORY CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section may be construed as limiting the actions that a rail passenger carrier may take, or the obligations that a rail passenger carrier may have, in providing assistance to the families of passengers involved in a rail passenger accident.”.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The table of chapters for subtitle V of title 49, United States Code, is amended by adding after the item relating to chapter 249 the following new item:

“251. FAMILY ASSISTANCE ..... 25101”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. PETRI) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. LAMPSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. PETRI).

Mr. PETRI. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the bill before us, H.R. 2681, the Rail Passenger Disaster Family Assistance Act. This is a bipartisan measure, and it is the product of diligent efforts by our committee chairman, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER) the committee’s ranking member, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR), and the Subcommittee on Ground Transportation’s ranking member, the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. RAHALL). I commend all of these gentlemen.

Mr. Speaker, this bipartisan bill is closely patterned on similar aviation legislation which the Congress enacted after the TWA 800 crash in 1996. This bill sets up a basic procedural framework for giving timely information to rail accident victims and their families and for dealing sensitively with the families.

The bill puts the National Transportation Safety Board in the role of the central coordinator, but relies heavily on private nonprofit organizations to handle much of the direct dealings with victims and with their families.

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Legislation is not based on any particular deficiencies in Amtrak’s dealing with accident victims. In fact, Amtrak already has begun to adopt many of the procedures contained in this bill. Rather, we want to have in place a set of proven procedures for any and all future providers of interstate intercity rail services and of high-speed rail service.

The 1997 Amtrak Reform and Accountability Act ended Amtrak’s former statutory monopoly of intercity rail passenger service, and allowed the States to choose alternative operators.

Since that law was enacted, a number of States have begun efforts to launch new conventional or high-speed rail passenger service. Therefore, we need to be prepared for a future of multiple rail passenger service providers.

This is highly effective and cost-conscious legislation. It builds on proven experience under the counterpart aviation law, and like that law, relies heavily on private, nonprofit organizations with a minimum of costs to our government.

The NTSB, for example, already has staff in place who deal with accident situations and relations with victims and with their families.

Mr. Speaker, I urge that this legislation be approved, and I reserve the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MILLER of Florida). The gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. RAHALL) is recognized to control the 20 minutes of time for the minority party.

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. PETRI) has explained the nature of the pending measure. I would simply note that it is an important one because it recognizes the human pain and suffering associated with severe injury and loss of life that unfortunately does occur at times in passenger rail service, so I urge the adoption of the pending measure.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PETRI. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. PETRI) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2681.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof), the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PETRI. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 2681, the bill just passed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Wisconsin?

There was no objection.

#### CONGRATULATING THE AMERICAN PUBLIC TRANSIT ASSOCIATION FOR 25 YEARS OF COMMENDABLE SERVICE TO THE TRANSIT INDUSTRY AND THE NATION

Mr. PETRI. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 171) congratulating the American Public Transit Association for 25 years of commendable service to the transit industry and the Nation.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 171

Whereas public transportation is a fundamental public service and an integral component of the Nation’s surface transportation infrastructure;

Whereas public transportation service results in productive jobs for the Nation’s workers and provides broad support for business and economic growth;

Whereas public transportation provides safe and efficient mobility for millions of people in the United States each day;

Whereas the American Public Transit Association was established in 1974 to promote and advance knowledge in all matters relating to public transportation; and

Whereas, during a period of remarkable resurgence in public transportation, the American Public Transit Association has provided a quarter of a century of service to the Nation as the professional association representing the transit industry: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That Congress congratulates the American Public Transit Association for 25 years of commendable service to the transit industry and the Nation.*

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. PETRI) and the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. RAHALL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. PETRI).

Mr. PETRI. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity today to bring this concurrent resolution to the floor of our House. House Concurrent Resolution 171 congratulates the American Public Transit Association on its upcoming 25th anniversary.

APTA was formed on October 17, 1974, when the American Transit Association and the Institute for Rapid Transit were merged. Today APTA has over 1,200 members, including bus, rapid transit, and commuter rail systems, as well as transit suppliers, government agencies, State Departments of Transportation, academic institutions, and trade publications.

In 1997, there were 8.6 billion transit trips in the United States. Ninety percent of these trips occurred on transit systems that are APTA members. APTA has been a strong advocate for transit issues in our Nation’s capital, as well as a resource for information