

FAA REAUTHORIZATION AND
REFORM ACT OF 2011

SPEECH OF

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 31, 2011

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 658) to amend title 49, United States Code, to authorize appropriations for the Federal Aviation Administration for fiscal years 2011 through 2014, to streamline programs, create efficiencies, reduce waste, and improve aviation safety and capacity, to provide stable funding for the national aviation system, and for other purposes:

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Chair, I rise today to reluctantly oppose the passage of the legislation before us: H.R. 658, the FAA Reauthorization and Reform Act of 2011. I say reluctantly because the FAA is in urgent need of a long-term authorization to guide it in this critical period of air traffic control modernization. As most folks know, FAA has been operating under a series of short-term extensions, the last of which passed the House on Tuesday. While these short-term extension have been necessary, they have made it difficult for the agency to engage in long-term planning.

However, while H.R. 658 reauthorizes the agency for four years, I must oppose this bill. There are several reasons for this opposition.

First, H.R. 658 imposes arbitrary and poorly considered spending reductions on the FAA. This bill imposes over 1 billion dollars of annual cuts from FY 2010 spending levels. These cuts will lead to costly job losses. This is not a "job-creating" bill—far from it! As Marion Blakey, the FAA Administrator under the Bush Administration, said at a hearing earlier this year about this bill, "the prospect is really devastating to jobs and to our future, if we really have to roll back [to 2008 levels] and stop NextGen in its tracks." As we begin to climb out of a deep recession, I question the wisdom of cutting air travel infrastructure spending which is critical to the continued growth to the industry. And this is an industry, I might add, that contributes approximately 1.3 trillion dollars and nearly 11 million jobs to our economy.

These funding cuts occur at a time when air traffic is increasing. It defies logic that we can cut funding for air traffic infrastructure and safety while at the same time experiencing a growth in civil air traffic without leading to reduced levels of safety. You cannot. Let's be clear: this bill will reduce the safety of the American flying public. Period.

In the Science, Space, and Technology Committee, where I serve as Ranking Member, the Majority pushed through a 23% cut to FAA's research account. What got cut? Fire safety research, icing research, and research into reducing pilot and ground crew errors—and many other important initiatives. My Democratic colleagues on the Committee tried to restore funding to the safety programs I just mentioned, at a modest cost to the overall bill. However, we were rebuffed in our efforts in party line votes. I find it unfortunate that the flying public will have to sacrifice their safety so that our Republican colleagues can hew to an arbitrary budget cutting number.

I would also like to express my strong opposition to the provision of this bill which repeals the National Mediation Board's Fair Elections Rule. The notion that your vote only counts if it is actually cast is a fundamental principle of democracy. I am particularly disappointed that the Republican Majority has decided to go about attacking worker rights in a bill that should be about creating jobs for American workers.

In addition, I want to comment about an omission in this bill. This bill does not address the issue of flight attendant occupational hazards. According to 2009 Bureau of Labor Statistics data, air transportation workers are exposed to more workplace injuries and illnesses than construction workers and workers on factory floors. Despite this, flight attendants are not protected by occupational safety and health standards. Moreover, flight attendant fatigue has been identified by the Civil Aerospace Medical Institute as a safety problem, and one that needs to be addressed. Unfortunately, H.R. 658 addresses neither of these important issues related to flight attendant safety.

There are several provisions in this bill that I do support. Namely, I am glad to see that the Airport Access Flexibility Program is included in the bill we are considering today. The Airport Access Flexibility Program was created through my leadership in 2009 and directs the Secretary to establish a pilot program at five airports where passenger facility charges may be used to finance the eligible cost of an intermodal ground access project. This program is of critical importance to Dallas Love Field Airport for a project that would link the airport to the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) System. Congressional intent is quite clear that Dallas Love Field Airport should receive priority consideration to be included in this program. I look forward to working with colleagues in the Senate to ensure that this program is retained in the final legislation.

Finally, in the Manager's amendment there is a provision to prohibit any new safety regulations affecting crew or passenger spaceflight safety until 2020 or even later. That is bad policy that will have adverse consequences for safety if enacted. FAA has notified us that they are strongly opposed to the provision, as am I.

Mr. Chair, I would have liked to support a bipartisan FAA reauthorization today. Unfortunately, Majority has decided to bring a bill to the floor today that costs American jobs, attacks American worker rights, and sacrifices the safety of the American flying public. Therefore, I will oppose the bill today, and hope that we can work together to fix the problems I have identified in this legislation as we move forward.

HONORING THE LIFE OF DR. MARK
COLOMB HIV/AIDS ACTIVIST

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, April 1, 2011

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the life of a true champion and humanitarian, Dr. Mark Colomb. Dr. Colomb's life mission addressed the health needs and concerns of blacks within the State

of Mississippi and other southern communities. A community activist, public health educator and public policy advocate, Colomb founded My Brother's Keeper, MBK, a national organization dedicated to reducing health disparities in African American communities. A principal architect of the Minority AIDS Initiative and founding member of the National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, Dr. Colomb is credited with garnering more \$9 million dollars, the largest of 12 five year national grants awarded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2000, to train African American community-based organizations throughout the U.S. and its territories on HIV/AIDS prevention and education. He played a central role in shaping both state and national HIV/AIDS policy legislation with particular focus on African American men and women.

His academic appointments included assistant professor of sociology, adjunct professor and statistical laboratory coordinator at Jackson State University and instructor at Tougaloo College.

Dr. Colomb was a member of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, Madison, MS.; a life member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.; and numerous social, professional and academic honor organizations, including, Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society and Pi Lambda Theta International Honor Society and Professional Association in Education.

Again, I ask that my colleagues please join me in saluting the life and legacy of Dr. Mark Colomb.

THANKING MS. MARIE COLARUSSO
HIGGS FOR HER SERVICE TO
THE HOUSE

HON. DANIEL E. LUNGREN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, April 1, 2011

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, on the occasion of her retirement on April 4, 2011, I rise to thank Ms. Marie Colarusso Higgs for over 38 years of outstanding service to the United States House of Representatives.

Marie began her career here in 1971, while a student at Potomac Senior High School in Maryland. She first worked as a clerk in the office of The Honorable Frank M. Clark of Pennsylvania. She went on to work for The Honorable Stephen L. Neal of North Carolina, The Honorable Martin Frost of Texas, the Office of the Clerk, and the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer. Marie has worked in every House office building from the basement of the Ford building to the fourth floor of the Capitol.

Marie's commitment to public service was best demonstrated following the events of September 11, 2001. During that time, she worked tirelessly to assist in setting up temporary offices for Members displaced by the anthrax evacuation. Marie's enthusiasm, professionalism, and attention to detail have made her an invaluable team member on many special projects. Her generosity and support of others have endeared her to her many colleagues and friends in the House community.

More recently, Marie demonstrated her commitment and dedication to serving others when