

Washington Internship program has now delivered 130 Australian student interns over the past 13 years.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage all of my colleagues to open their doors to students from around the world so that they can share in our great democracy. Similarly, I would encourage American university students to seek established and creative ways to connect with their counterparts around the globe. I ask my colleagues to join with me in recognizing the contributions of the Uni-Capitol Internship Program and to once more thank Niall O'Shea for his dedication and hard work.

HONORING JOSH UNDERWOOD

HON. ROBERT B. ADERHOLT

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 6, 2012

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to honor Mr. Josh Underwood, one of the twelve interns from the Uni-Capitol Washington Program, UCWIP who is currently interning in my office. The Uni-Capitol Washington Program has paired some of the brightest Australian students with various congressional offices for more than a decade and I am happy to have been a host.

Josh comes from University of Queensland and is studying law and philosophy. Over the past month, I have found him to be outstanding in his duties and going above and beyond our expectations. When complimenting Josh to Mr. Federing, the director agreed saying "Josh has been a standout among standouts in everything I've organized" and I agree wholeheartedly. He has attended committee hearings, drafted constituent correspondence, and assisted me as well as my staff with research. His Australian accent has garnered the attention of many of my constituents on tours and over the phone. Josh's commitment, hard work, and presence have been an asset to the office and he will be sorely missed by all.

The program has been in force for 13 years thanks to the vision of Eric Federing, its director and founder. The students who are selected come from a variety of academic disciplines, but all have a common interest: promoting the U.S.-Australia relationship. These student placements are enhanced by the formation of genuine friendships and the exchange of views and ideas between the Australian interns and their respective offices. We are grateful for these friendships and it is our hope that they strengthen the diplomatic ties of our great countries.

I would thank Eric Federing for the opportunity to host Josh over the past several weeks. To date, 130 interns have come through his program representing 8 different universities over the programs lifetime. It enhances opportunities for the individuals who come and enlighten those who they come to. After the internship, many receive jobs on the Hill or go to work with Federal or various State Parliaments in Australia. Other interns have gone onto work in the Australian Embassy or The World Bank. Simply put, this program selects incredibly talented individuals that are a pleasure to host and work with. It was an honor to have Josh in our office and would wish him the very best, but I sincerely doubt

he needs it. Josh, thank you again for your hard work and dedication.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 658,
FAA REAUTHORIZATION AND RE-
FORM ACT OF 2012

SPEECH OF

HON. LAURA RICHARDSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 3, 2012

Ms. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to discuss the Conference Report for H.R. 658, the FAA Air Transportation Modernization and Safety Improvement Act. I want to thank Chairman MICA, Ranking Member RAHALL, the other conferees, and the leadership for finally bringing an FAA Reauthorization bill to the floor.

Nearly five years has passed since the last FAA Reauthorization Act passed by the Congress and signed into law by the President expired. Instead of passing a new clean reauthorization bill five years ago, the reauthorization process was subverted by the desire of some members across the aisle to hijack the FAA reauthorization process as a to advance narrow ideological interests. This politicization of what had previously been a nonpartisan approach to developing aviation legislation was a great disservice to our nation, particularly in the economically challenged conditions of the past several years.

Every day thousands of men and women give their best to ensure that the American civil aviation industry remains the best in the world. And no group of persons suffered more from Congress' failure to pass a short-term clean FAA extension last August than the airline pilots, air traffic controllers, flight attendants, baggage handlers, mechanics, technicians, customer service representatives, security personnel, and others whose livelihood depends upon a functioning civil aviation sector.

This past August, House Republican leadership, giving in to the demands of its extremist Tea Party faction and ignoring the long-standing Congressional tradition of passing clean extensions of the FAA reauthorization bill, broke precedent and attached to the bill several controversial ideologically extreme policy riders to weaken unions and kill jobs, knowing full well it would never be approved by the Senate. Then it adjourned and left town for the August recess.

This abdication of responsibility resulted in the furlough of more than 4,000 FAA non-partisan career civil servants who in many cases had spent more than two decades working to provide the public with safe, modern and efficient air travel. This Republican-initiated FAA shutdown resulted in work stoppages on 217 construction projects worth more \$11 billion that had been undertaken to upgrade the nation's air traffic control and safety infrastructure.

This House majority's irresponsible action' more than 86,000 construction jobs at risks around the country and unconscionably jeopardized the ability of nearly 90,000 household to pay their rent or mortgages, educate their children, and put food on the table.

In addition to the havoc wreaked on the families of the employees involved, the Republicans' forced shutdown of the FAA cost

the American taxpayer \$300 million in lost airport fees. To make matters worse, instead of passing the savings resulting from the lapsed airline ticket tax on to air travelers, almost every one of the airlines raised their ticket prices and pocketed the money.

By any measure the House Republicans political gambit was a colossal blunder and the resulting public backlash led the chastened majority to drop the odious anti-labor provisions and pass a clean FAA extension thereby providing time for the parties to reconcile their differences and reach agreement on the long-term reauthorization measure before us today.

Turning to the merits of the bill before us, there is much in it that I approve and support.

First, the conference report maintains funding at current levels, authorizing a \$63.4 billion investment in our Nation's aviation system for fiscal years, FY, 2012–15. Of this amount, approximately \$13.4 billion is allocated for the Airport Improvement Program, AIP, \$38.3 billion for FAA Operations, \$672 million for Research, Engineering & Development, and \$10.9 billion for FAA's Facilities & Equipment.

Second, the bill provides about \$ 1 billion in funding authority for FAA's Next Generation, NextGen, air traffic modernization program, approximately the same as the past two years. When fully implemented, NextGen will complete the transformation of an antiquated air traffic control system based on World War II-era technology to one based on 21st Century GPS technology. Additionally, the bill accelerates the development of a NextGen satellite-based navigation system to provide pilots with more accurate information to track aircraft and weather. And to strengthen accountability for the progress on the NextGen program, the Conference Report sets a schedule for FAA and creates the new position of Chief NextGen Officer to oversee the effort.

Third, stripped from the Conference Report is the controversial House Republican provision that would have increased the percentage of employees who must vote in favor of a union before the National Mediation Board could certify the union as their representative. Had this provision not been dropped, it would have unfairly tilted the playing field against employees because a union could be certified only if it won the votes of a majority of all employees in a particular group, not just those who actually voted. It is clearly unfair to consider a vote not cast as a vote against. To put it another way: there is a gigantic difference between not voting and voting No! I am pleased that this anti-democratic provision has been dropped from the bill.

Fourth, the bill establishes a process for mediation and binding arbitration of impasses between the FAA and the collective-bargaining representatives of employees to help ensure that disputes are resolved fairly and efficiently without any disruption to the aviation system.

Fifth, the bill requires the FAA and OSHA to move forward with long-stalled rules to extend OSHA protections to flight attendants.

Sixth, the bill will help relieve congestion at many of the nation's interior hub airports by authorizing eight new round-trip flights between Reagan National Airport and airports located more than 1,250 miles away.

Finally, I am also pleased that H.R. 658 includes protections for passengers. For example, air travelers have greater assurance they will be treated fairly while traveling. Tarmac delays are something we have all experienced