

Contact: Steve Hansen (Communications Director) (202) 225-7749
Justin Harclerode (Communications Assistant) (202) 226-8767

To: National Desk/Transportation Reporter
September 19, 2001

Chairman Don Young's Statement At Hearing On Needs Of Airline Industry Following Terrorist Attacks

Washington, D.C. - Airline and industry employee representatives appeared before the U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee today to outline the significant needs of the airline industry mounting in the wake of last week's terrorist attacks. There is serious concern that, without immediate financial support from the Federal government, many U.S. airlines may go bankrupt as a result of the September 11th attacks.

The following is the opening statement of **U.S. Rep. Don Young (R-Alaska)**, Chairman of the Committee:

We are here today to address the threat to the continued stability and viability of our U.S. air transportation system.

The terrorists who attacked our country last week, were trying to destroy our way of life and our economy - but we must not let them do that.

They have murdered thousands of innocent people, destroyed billions of dollars in property and have dealt a terrible blow to an air transportation system that is vital to the economic health of our country.

On September 11, 2001 the FAA grounded every airplane in this country within a two-hour period. This was necessary for the safety and protection of our country and of our people.

I want to commend the FAA and the air traffic controllers for their quick response and decisive action.

I also want to commend the aviation industry for their cooperation and willingness to put the safety of others first.

Unfortunately, we are now facing a serious crisis in our air transportation system.

The reductions in schedules and flights have started and layoffs are being announced.

The capital markets are not coming to the aid of most of the airlines. We are seeing the ripple effect in our economy as layoffs occur in other related industries.

Our economy is at risk.

My colleague, Jim Oberstar, and I introduced H.R. 2891 to keep our U.S. air transportation system viable as we work with the all affected parties on other legislation.

In the coming weeks we intend to address other issues such as safety and security, economic impacts on other affected businesses, and how to address the future liability and insurability of this industry.

Certainly the airports, the general aviation sector, the air cargo industry, and the manufacturers all have valid concerns which need to be considered in the future.

I am sure that Chairman John Mica and the Aviation Subcommittee will thoroughly review all of those issues as our hearings continue this week and next.

H.R. 2891 authorizes the President to provide loans, loan guarantees, and other assistance to the air carriers and also to compensate those carriers who can document direct losses because of the action of our government to protect our national security.

This assistance is intended as a short term, emergency response to keep the air transportation system operating for the benefit of the American people.

We will take further action in the near future to address solutions for other airline or airport functions, such as further upgrading airport security.

I know many of you are concerned about airport security and the losses sustained by other businesses.

However, I urge you to focus today on the issue of how best to ensure the continued operation of our air transportation system.

We have additional hearings scheduled this Friday and next Tuesday on airline security issues and other issues.

I urge you to participate in those hearings to learn what is being done right now using the emergency funds already appropriated to increase security for the flying public.

The current crisis requires this bill to become law as quickly as possible to protect the well being of all Americans by preserving a functioning air transportation system.

I urge the members of this committee to fully support the effort to pass this legislation this week.

This is a very important hearing and we need to hear from these witnesses.

I want to bring this bill to the attention of the house as soon as possible.

#