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SITE SECTIONS

- Leader's Corner
- Media Center
- Issues & Answers
- Families First 2000

IN THIS SECTION

- Press Releases
- Multimedia
- Speeches and Articles
- Press Sign-Up Form

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Richard A.
GEPHARDT
MEDIA CENTER



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Date: 10/12/01

Democratic Leader Richard
Gephardt
H-204, U.S. Capitol

Gephardt on the Urgent Need for an Airline and Airport Security Bill

"I thank Jim Oberstar, Bob Menendez, Peter Defazio, Bill Lapinski, and all of the other Members who have worked so hard to put together the best airline and airport security bill for all Americans. We are here today to express our disappointment at what is not happening on the floor of the House today. Today, we should be taking up an airline and airport security bill.

"Last night, the Senate passed an airline security bill 100 to nothing - 100 to nothing. The American people, in overwhelming numbers, say that this is their top priority. Today, House Democrats propose a strong airline security bill that, in our view, is in keeping with the desires of the American people.

"The airline security bill is being stymied in the House because, frankly, a minority in the Congress is resisting a proposal to completely overhaul passenger and baggage screening at all points. A minority has a philosophical objection to putting this responsibility in the hands of federal law enforcement officers. President Lincoln said in another hour of national crisis and calamity: 'The dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise to the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.'

"The American people deserve to know that they are safe when they are in the air. They deserve a well trained, professional security system that is the best in the world. Travelers are forming ad hoc alliances, vigilante committees that are determined to take out hijackers if they appear on their flights.

"While we need vigilance, we don't need vigilantes. We need reliable law enforcement.

"Finally, let me say this: I think people in the country will have trouble understanding why the Congress can't just do what is rational and sensible at this time of crisis in the country. They understand that we need to move quickly and effectively in the area of increasing safety in every community in this country. And we need to start with

the airline industry, because that is where the problem first and most tragically presented itself.”

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