

LARSON CALLS ON SECRETARY MINETA TO FEDERALIZE AIRPORT SECURITY AND IMPROVE FLIGHT SAFETY

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Congressman Cosponsors Air Transportation Safety Legislation

WASHINGTON, D.C.—U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) called on the Secretary of Transportation, Norman Mineta to federalize airport security in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, in a letter sent today. Larson also urged Mineta to improve cockpit safety on board planes, enhance security for baggage check-in, and to utilize technology to further increase airport security and passenger safety.

"Larson also announced that he has cosponsored H.R. 2895, the Aviation Security Enhancement Act of 2001, which will expand the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Air Marshall Program and federalize the airport security screening system.

"The tragic events of September 11 have shown us that much stronger security measures must be taken in our airports and on board airliners to ensure passenger safety and to help discourage terrorist activity involving air transportation," said Larson. "Currently private security firms are hired by airports to screen passengers and luggage, and the employees responsible for the security of the airport and passengers are typically paid low wages, have limited training requirements that are not standardized and high turnover rates. Federalizing security for air travel would ensure that highly trained professionals with uniform training requirements would conduct these screenings for passengers and baggage.

"We must also increase the number of federal Marshals who are on board planes and equipped to deal with any terrorist threat. This step must also be coupled with establishing cockpit security for the crew flying the plane to further stifle attempted hijackings. We need to utilize photo security systems and other technology at our airports as part of a comprehensive set of new safety measures. This legislation, in addition to the action and recommendations I am requesting from Secretary Mineta, should go a long way toward restoring the stability of our air travel system, protecting the lives and safety of those in flight and on the ground, as well as enhancing public confidence in air travel. I look forward to working with Secretary Mineta and members of the House Transportation Committee as Congress prepares to address the airline security issue," said Larson.

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