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Herger Opposes "Seriously Flawed" Homeland Security Measure

(WASHINGTON, DC) - Congressman Wally Herger today voted against H.R. 1, the "Implementing the 9/11 Commission Recommendations Act of 2007." While the measure includes some positive reforms, it also contains potentially detrimental regulations that could actually undermine our homeland security. Herger made the following comment regarding the bill:

"My number one priority as a member of Congress is to support and advocate for policies that keep our nation safe and protect Americans from those who intend to harm us," Herger stated. "Regrettably today's measure includes seriously flawed provisions that are infeasible, irresponsible, and were not even recommended by the 9/11 Commission. That is why I voted against it.

"Regrettably, the new congressional majority bypassed the committee process and did not allow this measure to receive sufficient review. I'm disappointed by this action, and hope that promises for bipartisanship and an enhanced legislative process will be kept in the future," continued Herger.

Herger added, "I was particularly concerned by an impractical and counterproductive requirement to inspect every container entering U.S. ports. I strongly support the goal of improving inspections of cargo and, as such, voted for the SAFE Ports Act last year. Yet, today's legislation does not consider the effectiveness or feasibility of an arbitrary deadline for achieving one hundred percent scanning at all ports. For these reasons, I believe this measure could be detrimental to our economy while not improving our security situation."

"The legislation also includes a collective bargaining provision that would allow key airport security personnel to go on strike. The 9/11 Commission did not recommend this provision, and for good reason: The prospect of striking airport security workers would cripple the operation of this vital anti-terrorism function, and expose airports to increased security threats. Thus, I believe inclusion of this provision was deeply irresponsible," concluded Herger.

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Herger issued the following Statement for the Record regarding this measure:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of provisions in this bill that I believe will improve our national security. For instance, I support increasing protections at our most important infrastructure facilities, like dams and power plants, and improving the Homeland Security grant allocation process so that it is truly risk-based. I also agree with the provisions in the bill that would strengthen sanctions on countries that participate in the proliferation of nuclear materials, equipment and weapons technology.

However, I do have concerns with the bill's cargo inspection provision. We need to arrive at a system that ensures that all cargo entering the U.S. is safe. I believe the best way to approach supply chain security is through a risk-based approach, as endorsed by the SAFE Ports Act, which became law last fall. In particular, the SAFE Ports Act establishes a pilot program to test a system of 100% scanning at three ports. Then, based on lessons learned from that program, we could deploy a broader functioning inspection system.

Although the goal of today's legislation is laudable, I am concerned that it imposes an arbitrary deadline for its new requirement for 100% scanning in all ports without first considering the effectiveness of such a proposal or our ability to carry it out. We must also consider who will pay for this new program -- both inside and outside the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I remain committed to working with others in the House to see that the provisions of last year's SAFE Ports Act are implemented, and believe that the feasibility of any new measures and mandates should be demonstrated before they're passed into law.

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