

Castle Backs Legislation to Implement 9/11 Recommendations but Says it Falls Short - - January 9, 2007

Washington, D.C. -- As the House of Representatives today considered two measures with regards to intelligence and homeland security, Delaware Congressman Mike Castle, a former Member of the Intelligence Committee, spoke on the House floor to call for improvements to both pieces of legislation, saying they fall short of fulfilling the 9/11 Commission's recommendations in several critical security areas.

Specifically, the House passed H.Res. 35, a resolution to create a Select Intelligence Oversight Panel, which Castle opposed because he believes an actual Intelligence Appropriations Subcommittee, with subpoena power, should be created -- not just a panel. Instead, Castle introduced his own legislation to improve congressional oversight of intelligence by creating an Intelligence Appropriations Subcommittee.

"This Select Intelligence Oversight Panel is not what the 9/11 Commission recommended, instead it just adds another layer of bureaucracy without any power or ability to improve oversight with regards to intelligence funding. I've drafted legislation that would create a real subcommittee with the power to scrutinize the intelligence budget and set funding priorities for our intelligence community. Additionally, my legislation would declassify the top-line of the intelligence budget - a key 9/11 Commission recommendation that was not included in the Democrats' bill," Castle said.

The House also passed H.R. 1, The Implementing the Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act, which Castle supported, but said the legislation falls short of implementing all recommendations.

"Overall, I believe H.R. 1 includes some important provisions that will undoubtedly make our nation safer. However, while I support the intent of this legislation, I also feel strongly that the Democratic bill fails on several key points when it comes to fully implementing the 9/11 Commission's report.

"Specifically, I am disappointed that the bill falls short when it comes to improving intelligence funding oversight. Currently, intelligence funding is concealed in the classified section of the Pentagon's budget, and thus is subject to very little accountability. As a former Member of the House Intelligence Committee, I believe strongly that Congress must create a strong and independent intelligence appropriations subcommittee to oversee intelligence community funding. While I am hopeful that Speaker Pelosi's announcement of a new intelligence oversight commission will be effective, I have serious concerns that this commission will have very little control over the actual funding decisions. I am also disappointed that the bill does not implement the 9/11 Commission's recommendation to improve accountability by declassifying the top-line of total funding in the intelligence budget.

"In addition, the 9/11 Commission was adamant that our nation's rail and transit infrastructure is extremely susceptible to terrorist plots. While H.R. 1 focuses a great deal of attention on aviation security, it does not include critical rail and transit security funding provisions that were recommended by the Commission. In 2005, I introduced a comprehensive rail security bill that would increase the number of rail security officers and technology and create emergency preparedness and evacuation training programs for transportation personnel. Unfortunately these important provisions are absent from H.R. 1.

"Finally, while the bill includes port security measures that would ensure 100 percent inspection of incoming cargo, the legislation fails to improve our nation's biometric worker screening programs - such as the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC). I have been one of the biggest proponents of the TWIC program, and believe any comprehensive cargo screening program must first include an effective worker identification plan."

*Attached please find a fact sheet regarding Castle's additional priorities for security improvements. Please contact Congressman Castle's office for a copy of the bill.

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