

# ROLL CALL

## Travel Bill Takes Strange Journey Through Congress

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*By Don Wolfensberger, Roll Call Contributing Writer*

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When the House was debating a special rule for a chemical facility anti-terrorism bill on Thursday, Nov. 5, Rep. Dan Lungren (R-Calif.) noted that the rule also contained a provision “affectionately referred to as martial law” whereby “the majority, basically without notice, can bring up [any measure] at any time through Saturday, November 7, under suspension of the rules.” Because all rules are suspended, he went on, “a bill can be brought up from a committee and the entire text of the bill as passed out of the committee can be removed and we can have a different bill here on the floor.”

Little could Lungren have known that he would end up as the minority party manager of just such a bill the next day — a victim of his own prescience. That Friday, Rep. Susan Davis (D-Calif.) of the House Administration Committee moved to suspend the rules and pass a simple House resolution that she had just introduced. It called for concurring in a Senate amendment with a further amendment to a House bill making “technical corrections to laws affecting certain administrative authorities of the United States Capitol Police.”

Though Davis did not note it in her opening remarks, the House amendment contained in her resolution was a 42-page substitute that included 22 pages that had nothing to do with the Capitol Police. Instead, it would create a nonprofit corporation to promote international travel to the United States. (The Congressional Budget Office estimates the corporation’s five-year expenditures of \$630 million for travel promotion projects would be more than offset by \$1.13 billion in revenues from three sources: a \$10 fee imposed on foreign visitors traveling under the Visa Waiver Program, mandatory tourism industry assessments and voluntary industry contributions.)

When it was Lungren’s turn to speak, he said he favored the resolution and the Capitol Police bill, which he had worked on, but he noted that it was combined with the Travel Promotion Act. “What do these two separate bills have to do with one another?” he asked. “Absolutely nothing.” Nevertheless, the motion passed by voice vote and the new hybrid bill traveled back to the Senate where it is pending at the desk.

Also at the desk was another bill to which the same nongermane travel promotion language had been attached. A month earlier, on Oct. 7, the House received from the Senate an amended House bill, revising the Morris K. Udall Scholarship Act of 1992 “to honor the legacy of Stewart L. Udall.” Again, a simple House resolution was called up under suspension of the rules, this time by Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-Ariz.), to concur in the Senate amendment to the Udall bill with an amendment grafting the travel promotion bill language to it. On that occasion the resolution was adopted, 358 to 66.

The Senate had passed its own travel promotion bill in early September, 79 to 19. Introduced by Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.) with 53 co-sponsors, the bill was temporarily derailed in late June by a threatened filibuster. However, persistent Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) revived it two months later. It is currently pending at the desk in the House. A companion House bill introduced in June by Rep. Bill Delahunt (D-Mass.), along with 122 House co-sponsors, was referred to three House committees — Energy and Commerce, Judiciary, and Homeland Security — none of which took any action. That may be in part because Energy and Commerce Chairman Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) and Chairman Emeritus John Dingell (D-Mich.) still had problems with both chambers' travel promotion bills.

In an orchestrated exchange of letters on Oct. 7 for placement in the Congressional Record, the two House Democrats laid out their concerns to Dorgan, Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Chairman Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.) and tourism subcommittee Chairwoman Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.). “While there is strong support in the House for passage of S. 1023,” they wrote, “we remain concerned about some aspects of the bill.” However, rather than insisting on making changes in the pending bill, they vowed to work with the Senate to conduct “vigorous oversight ... once it is law and to make any changes to the legislation that may become necessary.”

In their response, the three Senators thanked Waxman and Dingell for their “significant interest in and contributions to” the bill and responded to the concerns raised. “Presuming passage of the Travel Promotion Act” that same day, they wrote, “and the president’s signature thereafter,” they looked forward to joining with their House counterparts in oversight efforts to ensure the program’s successful implementation.

Instead of taking up and passing the Senate bill that day, as the Senators had presumed, however, the House tacked the Senate-passed language onto the Udall scholarship bill and then, on Nov. 6, did the same thing with the Capitol Police bill.

Why this duplicative hitching of rides in strange vehicles? Apparently some concern was raised at the last minute that the visa waiver fee language in the Senate bill might violate the Constitution’s origination clause, which says only the House can originate revenue measures. The House usually votes to return (“blue slip”) such bills to the Senate rather than risk their being overturned in the courts. Secondly, a Senate version of the Udall scholarship bill was enacted in the interim, necessitating an alternative vehicle.

There’s nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come. That’s especially true of the travel promotion bill, which has overwhelming bipartisan support, is of great importance to the Senate Majority Leader (and Nevada’s lagging tourism economy), claims to create 40,000 new jobs nationwide and reduces the deficit — all at the same time. However, given the double-jointed split the bill performed in the House, it might be better titled, “The Travel Contortion Act.”

## Frequent fliers could face higher tax says Government climate adviser

**Frequent fliers could be taxed more, Lord Turner, the  
Government's climate change adviser has said.**

By [David Millward](#), Transport Editor  
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Lord Turner, chairman of Government's Committee on Climate Change. Photo: GETTY

The chairman of the Government's Committee on Climate Change suggested those who flew more often should face higher levies than those who travelled infrequently.

Lord Turner was speaking as the Committee unveiled its report which said drastic action – including higher taxes – were needed to curb the growth in aviation demand over the next four decades.

In its report, the Committee said that the number of people flying to and from British airports should increase by no more than 60 per cent by 2050 for the Government to meet its target of ensuring that aviation's carbon emissions are no higher than they were in 2005.

It has called for the cost of air travel to be raised by a number of means including higher taxes, charging airlines more for the carbon they use.

However Lord Turner admitted that "social fairness" would be a key factor in working out how these taxes would be levied.

"If you leave it entirely to a price regime, then people will be able to fly if they can afford it," Lord Turner said.

The report found that those earning more than £60,000 annually flew just under four times a year, while those on £20,000 took only two flights.

"We will have to see what our policy responses are and to examine whether we could increase the marginal cost of flying beyond two to three flights a year.

"I think there is a whole range of ideas people have floated. Could you have a tax which allows you to have a certain number of flights?"

Lord Turner suggested one model worth examining was that used by the electricity industry, where the tariff increases with use. "If you want to have more than the average number of flights, then you pay a higher price."

But Lord Turner's suggestions were condemned by Simon Evans, chief executive of the Air Transport Users Council. "I accept that there has to be a mature debate about mitigating our carbon footprint, but aviation should not be singled out.

"People fly for a wide range of reasons and this would not only discriminate against people on low incomes but also would mean that people who have to fly for work would face higher charges because they have used up their allowance."

The aviation industry also condemned calls for new taxes to curb demand for flights, arguing that airlines could meet the global demand for a reduction in emissions by improved technology, alternative fuels and improved air traffic management, which would cut the amount of time planes spent circling airports waiting to land.