

(Washington, D.C.) – On Thursday evening, U.S. Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12) cosponsored the final Democratic amendment to the annual Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act. The amendment, which Holt authored with Rep. Tim Bishop (NY-01), would have restored \$75 million in cut funding to security programs for intercity passenger rail, freight rail, and mass transit.

The House rejected the Bishop-Holt Amendment on a 187-234 vote, thereby affirming the security funding cuts.

Below is the prepared text of remarks that Holt delivered on the House floor in support of the amendment. Video of Holt's remarks is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVGBdYHKYT8>

“Mr. Chairman, this final proposed amendment to the bill has a simple purpose: it would prevent reckless cuts to the intercity passenger rail, freight rail, and transit security grant program.

“In the wake of the raid that killed Osama bin Laden, we learned that the Al Qaeda leader was planning attacks on the U.S. passenger rail system at the time of his death. Even as we debate this bill, our intelligence and law enforcement communities are running to ground leads about these and other potential terrorist plots against the American people. This discovery underscores the need to sustain, not cut, transit security funding which protects the millions of Americans who use mass transit every day.

“Following the terrible events of September 11, 2001, our nation took unprecedented steps to secure our nation's airlines. I strongly support this important effort. However, transit security grant programs remain badly underfunded given both the volume of riders carried each day and the known terrorist threat to such passengers. We need these funds to field canine teams, install surveillance cameras and security fencing at vulnerable facilities, provide the resources for incident response training exercises and a host of other mission-critical activities that are required to help secure our trains and buses systems from potential London or Madrid-style attacks.

“Transit provides 18 times as many passenger trips as aviation, but aviation receives 12 times as much security funding as surface transportation security. Spending per passenger for transit security is 4 cents; for aviation, it’s \$8.67. Aviation security receives 215 times as much federal funding per passenger as transit. We still have far more to do to protect rail and transit travelers from terrorist attacks. And the threat is real.

“Since 2004, terrorist cells have conducted successful and deadly bombings on major passenger rail systems in Spain, the United Kingdom, India, and Belarus, with over 600 people killed and over 3200 wounded. If we are serious about prevent tragedies like these and about thwarting bin Laden’s posthumous plot to attack trains in America, we will pass this amendment. I ask all my colleagues to support this motion.”

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