

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 658, the FAA Air Transportation Modernization and Safety Improvement Act.

Mr. Speaker, we are considering this multiyear authorization after twenty-three temporary FAA extensions since 2007. The men and women who keep our skies safe deserve a long-term authorization. The American people deserve a long-term authorization. But I cannot support the long-term authorization that the conference committee has brought to us today.

There are good provisions included in this conference agreement. This agreement contains language I wrote to support service disabled veteran-owned small businesses in the Airport Improvement Program. I am also pleased that this agreement includes funding for Essential Air Service and Next Generation air traffic control systems, and that it requires airlines to implement emergency contingency plans for passengers who are subject to extended tarmac delays. It also ensures a fair collective bargaining process for our Nation's air traffic controllers.

However, the bill has a number of provisions that are serious problems, and thus I oppose the bill. For example, the bill fails to fundamentally address the transportation of lithium batteries on airplanes. Further, the bill attacks collective bargaining for other aviation employees. This conference agreement dramatically revises a 75-year-old statute that was crafted by labor-management cooperation and should not be changed without the agreement of both employer and employee representatives.

There is no reason for these provisions to be included in this bill other than the majority's desire to attack American workers' right to organize at every opportunity they get. This bill should not seek to change three-quarters of a century's worth of labor protections. The FAA reauthorization is not the place to rewrite federal labor law. And I urge my colleagues to join me in opposing it.