

NLR/VP Tolman Asks BLET Membership to Support H.R. 5808, 5814 & 5483

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Vice President & National Legislative Representative John Tolman reports that the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee has approved by voice vote H.R. 5808, the Public Transportation Security Assistance Act of 2006. The bill was introduced on July 17, 2006 by Rep. Don Young (R-AK). It is co-sponsored by Representatives Peter DeFazio (D-NY), James Oberstar (D-MN) and Thomas Petri (D-WI).

The legislation would authorize the Secretary of Transportation to make grants to public transportation agencies and over-the-road bus operators to improve security, and for other purposes. It would authorize about \$3.4 billion in grants through fiscal 2009 to public transportation agencies for capital and operational security improvements, as well as an additional \$150 million in grants specifically to safeguard buses.

It would direct \$3 million through 2009 to the

Information Sharing and Analysis Center for Public Transportation and would require public transportation agencies that federal Transportation Department officials deem at "significant risk of a terrorist attack" to furnish the center with information.

Representative Petri introduced an amendment – that was also approved by voice vote – to give priority grants to systems on the basis of risk.

Also on Wednesday, the House Homeland Security Committee approved a bill reauthorizing the Homeland Security Department, H.R. 5814. The bill included language aimed at boosting rail security and also included a grants program for rail and transit security. The grants program would be administered on the basis of risk and need.

If passed, these bills would hopefully close some of the security gaps that remain in our nation's public transportation and railroad system, according to Vice President Tolman.

The Transportation committee also approved H.R. 5483, the Railroad Retirement Disability Earnings Act. Current law limits the outside earnings

of a railroad worker drawing disability benefits from the Railroad Retirement Board to a maximum of \$400 per month and \$4800 per year. These limits have remained unchanged for more than a decade. The bill would repeal the current fixed limits and raise the monthly limit to \$700 effective January 1, 2007, and enact an indexing formula to provide for automatic increases in the future. This was approved by a voice vote.

Vice President John Tolman asks that BLET members contact their members of Congress and urge them to support these pieces of legislation.