

**Mr. SCOTT of Virginia:** Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1615, the Securing Aircraft Cockpits Against Lasers Act of 2007. And I want to thank Chairman *Conyers* for holding a markup and moving the bill through the full committee. I would also like to thank our colleague, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. *Keller*), who has been instrumental in bringing attention to this issue. Congressman *Keller* introduced this bill in the 109th Congress. I joined him in cosponsoring the bill then, and I continue to support the legislation now.

The purpose of the bill is to address the problem of individuals aiming lasers at cockpits of aircraft, and this is particularly troublesome since it will usually occur at the critical stages of take-off and landing. This practice obviously constitutes a threat to aviation security and passenger safety. The bill adds a section following title 18, U.S. Code, section 38, to impose criminal penalties upon any individual who knowingly aims a laser pointer at an aircraft within the special aircraft jurisdiction of the United States.

The penalties impose imprisonment up to 5 years in prison.

Research from the FAA has shown that laser illuminations can temporarily disorient or disable a pilot during critical stages of flight, such as taking off and landing, and in some cases may cause permanent injury to the pilot. For example, in 2004, a laser aimed at an airplane flying over Salt Lake City injured the eye of one of the plane's pilots. In January, 2005, responding to concerns regarding this escalating problem, the FAA issued an advisory to pilots instructing them to immediately report laser beams directed at their aircraft.

The House passed similar legislation in the 109th Congress. The Senate did, also. The legislation placed a provision in title 49, the Transportation title, and included a different level of intent. The House and Senate were unable to agree on a compromise version before the end of the 109th Congress. This version represents a compromise between the House and the Senate from the last Congress.

Although I have some concern that when the bill is applied it might involve some misguided young person fooling around with a laser beam, I realize that the conduct the bill prohibits can be dangerous, so it must be strongly discouraged. Since the bill does not have mandatory minimum sentencing, the Sentencing Commission and the courts can apply appropriate punishment for violators based on the facts and circumstances of the individual case.

After the bill is passed, as a further precautionary step, the appropriate committee of jurisdiction should consider requiring manufacturers of laser products to issue strong notices and warnings on the items and packaging regarding the provision of this law to put users on notice.

Mr. Speaker, I think passing this bill is an appropriate step for Congress to address this potentially dangerous problem. Accordingly, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation.