

House-Senate conferees to work out differences on recommendations of 9/11 Commission

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WASHINGTON, DC-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi today appointed U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Springfield) as a conferee on H.R. 1, legislation to implement the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. DeFazio is a senior member of the House Homeland Security Committee and House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, both committees have jurisdiction over H.R. 1.

H.R. 1 was the first bill passed by the House this year after the Democrats took control of Congress. The bill would implement the recommendations of the 9/11 commission. The House passed H.R. 1 by a bipartisan vote of 299-128 in early January. The Senate passed its version of the bill (S. 4) by a vote of 60-38 in March.

Several recent events indicate the need to strengthen our anti-terror efforts. Earlier today, the unclassified version of the new National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) was released which states that Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network has been able to restore key capabilities it would need to launch an attack on U.S. soil. And last week several top U.S. intelligence officials testified before Congress that Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network poses the most serious threat since 9/11.

Both the House and Senate bills contain strong provisions to better protect America from terrorism, prevent terrorists from acquiring WMD, and authorize strategies for curbing the appeal of extremism around the world. The following provisions are some of the key provisions in the House-passed bill.

- Improves the explosive screening of checked baggage at airports, by requiring the rapid installation of the latest in-line explosive detection systems at airports.

- Expands the screening of cargo on passenger aircraft, by establishing a system for phasing in the inspection of 100% of cargo carried on passenger aircraft over the next three years.
- Beefs up efforts to prevent the proliferation of WMD, including strengthening the Defense Department's Nunn-Lugar program, strengthening the Energy Department's Global Threat Reduction Initiative, and creating a Coordinator for the Prevention of WMD Proliferation, who would serve as a presidential advisor.
- Cracks down on the transfer of nuclear technology, by requiring the President to impose sanctions on any person who trades nuclear enrichment technology to a non-nuclear weapons state.
- Enhances communications interoperability for first responders, by establishing a stand-alone communications interoperability grant program.
- Strengthens efforts to prevent terrorist travel, including by authorizing the hiring of additional experienced intelligence analysts who are specialists in the field of terrorist travel.
- Improves intelligence and information sharing between state, local and federal law enforcement , by taking such steps as strengthening intelligence fusion centers and providing local law enforcement with a presence at the National Counter Terrorism Center.
- Strengthens public diplomacy and other efforts to reduce the appeal of extremism, including beefing up U.S. educational, economic development and other aid programs overseas.

Once the Conference Committee works out the differences between the House and Senate versions of the anti-terror legislation, both chambers will have to approve the final compromise bill before it goes to the President for his signature.