United States and Germany, as well as passengers connecting in either country for travel to a third country, will benefit enormously. These consumer benefits will include increased choice and competitive air fares.

Mr. President, the United States-German open skies agreement is the product of bold and visionary leadership by two men. I refer to our Secretary of Transportation Federico Peña and German Transport Minister Matthias Wissmann. Secretary Peña had the vision to identify this opportunity and to recognize that competition will be our best ally in opening restrictive European air service markets such as those in the United Kingdom and France. Minister Wissmann had the vision to recognize the economic benefits of an open skies agreement with the United States are a two-way street.

In addition, I want to praise the great work of four men who labored for months to negotiate the fine points of this agreement. For the United States, I commend the outstanding work of Mark Gerchick, DOT's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs, and John Bylerly, special negotiator for Transportation Affairs at the State Department. For the Germans, I commend the outstanding work of Dr. Jurgen Pfohler, Deputy chief of staff to Minister Wissmann, and Dieter Bartkowski, Director of the Air Transport Section at the German Ministry of Transport. The United States-German open skies agreement is a fitting tribute to their efforts and exemplary public service.

What does the United States-German open skies agreement do in terms of putting aviation relations between our two countries on the firm foundation of market principles? It will allow airlines of both countries to operate to any points in either country, as well as third countries, without limitation. It also liberalizes pricing, charter services and further liberalizes the open skies cargo regime already in place. In short, it allows market demand, not the heavy hands of governments, to decide air service between the United States and Germany.

How will this open skies agreement benefit all U.S. carriers? It will create tremendous new air service opportunities between the United States and Germany in which all U.S. carriers can partake. Also, German airports will provide well-situated gateway opportunities for our carriers to serve points throughout Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and the booming Asia-Pacific market. These gateway opportunities offer the double benefit of serving as a means of breaking the bottleneck at London's Heathrow Airport and offering a backdoor to the booming Asia-Pacific market.

All U.S. carriers also will receive indirect benefits from the United States-German open skies agreement. I predict the United States-German open skies agreement will be an important catalyst for further liberalization of air service opportunities throughout Europe. In fact, I believe this agreement will serve as a template for such liberalization. Hopefully, the United States-German open skies agreement, in combination with open skies agreements we already have with 11 other European nations, will force the United Kingdom and France to come to the alter of air service competition.

Mr. President, let me conclude by saying that today is a very important day in U.S. international aviation policy and U.S. trade policy. It also is an important day in United States-German economic and political relations. Perhaps most important, it is a great day for consumers in both countries.

UNITED STATES-GERMAN BILATERAL AGREEMENT

Mr. FORD. Mr. President, this morning the Department of Transportation announced an open skies agreement with Germany. Access to Germany, as Secretary Peña has recognized, is critical. I want to recognize the effort by the administration and the Secretary is aggressively pursuing an open skies agreement with Germany.

The agreement today does three things. First, it will enable our carriers to satisfy consumer demand this summer. Second, the Secretary and the German Government also will sign an important safety agreement. Finally, the two countries have initialed an open skies agreement.

The open skies agreement is the 10th with a European country and is a big step forward in our efforts to liberalize aviation agreements in Europe. Germany is the second largest European market. I caution my colleagues not to get over-confident—countries like the United Kingdom are not likely to jump on the bandwagon quickly. Each country and market differs. We also must focus on Japan, which I will discuss at a later date.

This open skies agreement is a major step forward. With all of the praise forthcoming today for the administration and Secretary Peña, I want to raise one issue. The effective date of the open skies agreement is triggered by favorable treatment of an application for antitrust immunity by Lufthansa and United. I have been assured that the request will be treated separately, and that the two matters are not linked. I know the Departments of Justice and Transportation will review the request thoroughly. I would have preferred that consumer benefits of an open skies agreement not be held hostage to a subsequent and independent review of the antitrust issue. This open skies agreement, as the Secretary recognizes, is an important one. I hope that this agreement, and others in the future, are able to be implemented without extraneous issues encumbering the process. I am certain Secretary Peña shares my views and I congratulate him on this breakthrough today.

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 11:06 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Hays, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House disagrees to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 1561) to consolidate the foreign affairs agencies of the United States; to authorize appropriations for the Department of State and related agencies for fiscal years 1996 and 1997; to responsibly reduce the authorizations of appropriations for United States foreign assistance programs for fiscal years 1996 and 1997, and for other purposes, and agrees to the conference asked by the Senate on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon; and appoints Mr. GILMAN, Mr. GOODLING, Mr. HYDE, Mr. ROTH, Mr. BEREUTER, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. BURTON of Indiana, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Mr. HAMILTON, Mr. GEJDENSON, Mr. LANTOS, Mr. TORRICELLI, Mr. BERMAN, and Mr. ACKERMAN as the managers of the conference on the part of the House.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

The following enrolled bill, previously signed by the Speaker of the House, was signed on February 28, 1996, by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND]:

H.R. 2196. An act to amend the Stevenson-Wydler Technology Innovation Act of 1980 with respect to inventions made under cooperative research and development agreements, and for other purposes.

MEASURE REFERRED

The Committee on Rules and Administration was discharged from further consideration of the following measure which was referred to the Committee on Governmental Affairs:

S. 1577. A bill to authorize appropriations for the National Historical Publications and Records Commission for fiscal years 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following measure was read the first and second times by unanimous consent and placed on the calendar:

H.R. 2854. An act to modify the operation of certain agricultural programs.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, which were referred as indicated:

EC–1898. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of three rescission proposals of budgetary resources relative to Bosnia peace implementation force, pursuant to the order of January 30, 1975, as modified by the order of April 11, 1986, to the Committee on Appropriations, Committee on the Budget, and to the Committee on Armed Services.