

THE DAILY 45: YOUNG PERCY
ROUNDS SHOT TO DEATH IN
WEST PULLMAN

HON. BOBBY L. RUSH

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 23, 2008

Mr. RUSH. Madam Speaker, the Department of Justice tells us that, everyday, 45 people, on average, are fatally shot in the United States. Chicago is but one of several American cities that are struggling through an escalating wave of gun-related violence this summer.

On Monday, in the West Pullman neighborhood of Chicago's Far Southside, 15-year-old Percy Rounds, a promising young man, lost his life to an unknown assailant. Like a bad scene from an all-too-familiar movie, Rounds was shot to death by a gunman who sprang out of a gangway. Sadly, for several days prior to Rounds' murder, local residents said they'd heard a steady stream of gunfire throughout their neighborhood. Think about that. A steady stream of gunfire in a residential community.

I extend my heartfelt condolences to Percy Rounds' family and friends. His grieving aunt described her nephew this way, "He was a good kid. He gave himself to the Lord. He's been going to church faithfully every Sunday. He wasn't in a gang." His aunt, a nurse, had the presence of mind to share these sentiments after trying valiantly to stop the bleeding from a fatal wound to her nephew's head.

Americans of conscience must come together to stop the senseless death of "The Daily 45." When will we say "enough is enough, stop the killing!"

MOTION TO GO TO CONFERENCE
ON S. 294, PASSENGER RAIL INVESTMENT AND IMPROVEMENT
ACT OF 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 22, 2008

Mr. HOLT. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 294, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008, legislation that would authorize \$14.9 billion in funding for Amtrak over the next 5 years.

Rail service has integrated small communities with large cities across the country providing opportunity for economic expansion, increased mobility, and environmentally sound transit. Since Amtrak was founded in 1971, our country has benefited from organized, reliable and safe service to individuals commuting to and from work and individuals using rail service for extended travel. Amtrak also serves as an essential component of easing traffic congestion, reducing wear and tear on roads, protecting our environment and preserving open space across the country. With the skyrocketing costs of airline flights and gas prices at over \$4 a gallon, individuals are relying more and more on rail service.

It is no exaggeration to say that rail service is the lifeline from which New Jersey's state economy draws nourishment. Our region's employers—small, medium, and large—de-

pend upon an integrated rail operation to enable many of their employees to get to and from work. Clients, potential clients, and business partners use the train to come to New Jersey. Our local entrepreneurs use Amtrak to pitch their ideas and sell their products outside of our home state.

It is thus of critical importance that we provide Amtrak with the funding it needs to support its growing ridership, both in New Jersey and throughout the country. For the last 12 years, Amtrak has been suffering from a lack of federal support and for the last 6 years it has been operating without Congressional authorization. In order to keep from going out of business, Amtrak was forced to delay crucial repairs and security improvements, freeze the salaries of its employees, renege on employee pensions and go billions of dollars into debt. The legislation before us today would authorize the funding necessary to improve Amtrak's operations throughout the country and bring our country's rail service into the 21st Century.

S. 294 authorizes \$14.9 billion for Amtrak over the next 5 years, \$4.2 billion of which would be used for capital grants to help Amtrak afford to make necessary repairs and upgrades to the Northeast Corridor. It would also allow Amtrak to procure new rolling stock, rehabilitate existing bridges, as well as make additional capital improvements and maintenance over its entire network.

As a regular Amtrak rider, I appreciate the professionalism and service that customers enjoy every day. Amtrak's hard working employees, including the over 1,300 employed in New Jersey, have continued to provide high quality service despite Amtrak's payroll freezes and pension problems. The Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act would provide Amtrak with \$3 billion in operating grants, which would help Amtrak make good on its promises to these employees. A portion of these funds would be used to pay employees salaries, health costs, and overtime pay. It would also help Amtrak pay for increasing fuel costs, facilities, maintenance and train operations.

This legislation would also create a new Capital Grant program to provide grants for States for intercity passenger rail capital projects. In New Jersey the demand for public transportation has increased dramatically, with NJ Transit providing 900,000 trips per weekday on its trains, buses and light-rail vehicles. S. 294 would authorize over \$2.5 billion in grants to states over the next 5 years to help organizations like NJ Transit pay for the capital costs of facilities and the equipment necessary to provide new or improved intercity passenger rail.

I am pleased that S. 294 includes language I wrote with Representative MURPHY that would require Amtrak to study the feasibility of increasing passenger rail service between Princeton Junction, NJ, and Philadelphia, PA. The Princeton Junction station has seen a 90 percent decrease in Amtrak ridership since 2004 due to reductions in Amtrak service at the Princeton Junction Station. While NJ Transit was able to step in to fill the service void to New York City, commuters to Philadelphia no longer have access to direct. The demand for public transportation will continue to increase, and it is essential that we ensure that we are using existing transportation resources efficiently to meet this demand. This study would require Amtrak to ensure that they are using this station effectively.

The Passenger Rail Investment Reauthorization Act would also provide \$1.7 billion over the next 5 years to help Amtrak pay off the debt it incurred when Congress drastically cut its funding in 2000 and 2001. Amtrak has aggressively targeted this debt, paying down \$600 million from 2002 through 2007. This bill would help Amtrak take further steps to reduce its debt, and allow Amtrak to focus its resources on improving existing services and making additional capital and operational improvements.

S. 294 would bring American passenger rail into the 21st century, authorizing \$1.7 billion for the construction of eleven high-speed rail networks spanning the entire Nation, the first of which would be a high-speed rail corridor between Washington, D.C. and New York City. Countries like France, England and Japan have greatly improved the experience of commuters through the utilization of high speed corridors. This would lead to more efficient public transportation and help the more than 1.5 million New Jerseyans who use Amtrak spend less time commuting and more time at home with their families.

Supporting public transportation especially passenger rail, should be a crucial element of our national effort to slow the rate of global climate change and reduce our dependence on foreign fuels. Passenger rail consumes 21 percent less energy per passenger mile than automobiles and 17 percent less than airplanes. It releases half the amount of greenhouse gases per passenger mile as either air or car travel. The continued operation of Amtrak is an essential component of easing traffic congestion, reducing wear and tear on roads, protecting our environment and preserving open space in New Jersey and across the country.

Rail service is a fundamental component of our Nation's continually growing transportation system, and Amtrak has demonstrated the capacity of integrated rail service to expand economic opportunity, commuter options, and make vital contributions to the fabric of our communities. I urge my colleagues to support S. 294.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. AL GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 23, 2008

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Madam Speaker, I was unavailable to vote on July 16th and had I been present I would have voted "yea" on rollcalls 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 501, 504, 505, 507, and 508. I would have voted "nay" on rollcalls 500, 502, 503, and 506.

HONORING OFFICER JACOB CHESTNUT
AND DETECTIVE JOHN GIBSON

HON. MICHAEL E. CAPUANO

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 23, 2008

Mr. CAPUANO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to United States Capitol Police Officer Jacob Joseph Chestnut and Detective John Michael Gibson, who were both