

I would like to thank Representative TULSI GABBARD, a fellow veteran with a distinguished career in the United States Navy and a current member of the Hawaiian National Guard. Representative GABBARD and I have been fortunate to work together on this bill for almost 3 years now, and I am grateful for her work to bring this bill to this point.

I would also like to thank Chairman BRADY, Chairman THORBERRY, Chairman TIBERI, Chairman HECK, and each of their staffs for their great work and their support in refining the bill and bringing it to the floor today. I am grateful for a similar measure that will be included in the National Defense Authorization Act we will be voting on later this week.

Finally, I would like to thank Nathaniel Johnson, a former member of my staff, a member of the Utah National Guard, a former combat medic who served in Afghanistan, and of course we called him Doc then. I would like to thank Doc, who felt compelled to see this bill through to its conclusion.

Mr. Speaker, our veterans deserve our most profound gratitude. Nothing about their military service should prevent them from accessing the same benefits as their nonveteran coworkers. The very least we can do for them is ensure they receive the benefits we promised them and that the process goes forward as smoothly as possible. I recognize we have lots to do on that front, but I am hopeful the passage of this bill will be one small step forward in that direction.

Mr. Speaker, I urge a “yes” vote.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. GABBARD).

Ms. GABBARD. Mr. Speaker, the problem that this bill seeks to solve for our veterans is, unfortunately, not uncommon. I have heard from many of my fellow veterans, as has previously been explained, who have similarly not been able to access options widely available to their civilian coworkers because of the current limitations in the law; and that is what this bill seeks to do: correct it.

The Veterans TRICARE Choice Act simply gives veterans and their dependents a choice: They can opt out of TRICARE and contribute to a health savings account with more flexibility and coverage options without fear of permanently losing their TRICARE coverage; and if their situation later changes, they will have the option to reenroll in TRICARE coverage, plain and simple.

Our veterans and their families make tremendous sacrifices in service to our country, and that service should never limit their access to quality health care and their ability to make their own decisions about their own health and the health care for their families in the future.

I would like to thank and congratulate my friend and colleague, CHRIS

STEWART, for his leadership on pushing this issue forward, and I encourage my colleagues to join us in supporting H.R. 5458 today.

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Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is one of those things that you fill time with, and I guess it is not going to hurt anything. So I would recommend that all of my colleagues vote for it. It will be moot on Friday, when we pass the NDAA.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to again thank Mr. STEWART for his efforts. This is a good bill that, as the gentlewoman from Hawaii mentioned, will help many folks—certainly, those that she has heard from and I know others have as well. I support more veterans having more options. I support the bill’s passage and urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5458, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RESPONSE ACT OF 2016

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 546) to establish the Railroad Emergency Services Preparedness, Operational Needs, and Safety Evaluation (RESPONSE) Subcommittee under the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s National Advisory Council to provide recommendations on emergency responder training and resources relating to hazardous materials incidents involving railroads, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 546

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “RESPONSE Act of 2016”.

SEC. 2. RAILROAD EMERGENCY SERVICES PREPAREDNESS, OPERATIONAL NEEDS, AND SAFETY EVALUATION SUBCOMMITTEE.

Section 508 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 318) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (d) as subsection (e); and

(2) by inserting after subsection (c) the following:

“(d) RESPONSE SUBCOMMITTEE.—

“(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of the RESPONSE Act of 2016, the Administrator shall establish, as a subcommittee of the National Advisory Council, the Railroad Emergency Services Preparedness, Operational Needs, and Safety Evaluation Subcommittee (referred to in this subsection as the ‘RESPONSE Subcommittee’).

“(2) MEMBERSHIP.—Notwithstanding subsection (c), the RESPONSE Subcommittee shall be composed of the following:

“(A) The Deputy Administrator, Protection and National Preparedness of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or designee.

“(B) The Chief Safety Officer of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, or designee.

“(C) The Associate Administrator for Hazardous Materials Safety of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, or designee.

“(D) The Director of the Office of Emergency Communications of the Department of Homeland Security, or designee.

“(E) The Director for the Office of Railroad, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Investigations of the National Transportation Safety Board, or designee.

“(F) The Chief Safety Officer and Associate Administrator for Railroad Safety of the Federal Railroad Administration, or designee.

“(G) The Assistant Administrator for Security Policy and Industry Engagement of the Transportation Security Administration, or designee.

“(H) The Assistant Commandant for Response Policy of the Coast Guard, or designee.

“(I) The Assistant Administrator for the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response of the Environmental Protection Agency, or designee.

“(J) Such other qualified individuals as the co-chairpersons shall jointly appoint as soon as practicable after the date of the enactment of the RESPONSE Act of 2016 from among the following:

“(i) Members of the National Advisory Council that have the requisite technical knowledge and expertise to address rail emergency response issues, including members from the following disciplines:

“(I) Emergency management and emergency response providers, including fire service, law enforcement, hazardous materials response, and emergency medical services.

“(II) State, local, and tribal government officials.

“(ii) Individuals who have the requisite technical knowledge and expertise to serve on the RESPONSE Subcommittee, including at least 1 representative from each of the following:

“(I) The rail industry.

“(II) Rail labor

“(III) Persons who offer oil for transportation by rail.

“(IV) The communications industry.

“(V) Emergency response providers, including individuals nominated by national organizations representing State and local governments and emergency responders.

“(VI) Emergency response training providers.

“(VII) Representatives from tribal organizations.

“(VIII) Technical experts.

“(IX) Vendors, developers, and manufacturers of systems, facilities, equipment, and capabilities for emergency responder services.

“(iii) Representatives of such other stakeholders and interested and affected parties as the co-chairpersons consider appropriate.

“(3) CO-CHAIRPERSONS.—The members described in subparagraphs (A) and (B) of paragraph (2) shall serve as the co-chairpersons of the RESPONSE Subcommittee.

“(4) INITIAL MEETING.—The initial meeting of the RESPONSE Subcommittee shall take place not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of the RESPONSE Act of 2016.

“(5) CONSULTATION WITH NONMEMBERS.—The RESPONSE Subcommittee and the program offices for emergency responder training and resources shall consult with other relevant agencies and groups, including entities engaged in federally funded research and academic institutions engaged in relevant work and research, which are not represented on the RESPONSE Subcommittee to consider new and developing technologies and methods that may be beneficial to preparedness and response to rail hazardous materials incidents.

“(6) RECOMMENDATIONS.—The RESPONSE Subcommittee shall develop recommendations, as appropriate, for improving emergency responder training and resource allocation for hazardous materials incidents involving railroads after evaluating the following topics:

“(A) The quality and application of training for State and local emergency responders related to rail hazardous materials incidents, including training for emergency responders serving small communities near railroads, including the following:

“(i) Ease of access to relevant training for State and local emergency responders, including an analysis of—

“(I) the number of individuals being trained;

“(II) the number of individuals who are applying;

“(III) whether current demand is being met;

“(IV) current challenges; and

“(V) projected needs.

“(ii) Modernization of training course content related to rail hazardous materials incidents, with a particular focus on fluctuations in oil shipments by rail, including regular and ongoing evaluation of course opportunities, adaptation to emerging trends, agency and private sector outreach, effectiveness and ease of access for State and local emergency responders.

“(iii) Identification of overlap in training content and identification of opportunities to develop complementary courses and materials among governmental and nongovernmental entities.

“(iv) Online training platforms, train-the-trainer, and mobile training options.

“(B) The availability and effectiveness of Federal, State, local, and nongovernmental funding levels related to training emergency responders for rail hazardous materials incidents, including emergency responders serving small communities near railroads, including—

“(i) identifying overlap in resource allocations;

“(ii) identifying cost savings measures that can be implemented to increase training opportunities;

“(iii) leveraging government funding with nongovernmental funding to enhance training opportunities and fill existing training gaps;

“(iv) adaptation of priority settings for agency funding allocations in response to emerging trends;

“(v) historic levels of funding across Federal agencies for rail hazardous materials incident response and training, including funding provided by the private sector to public entities or in conjunction with Federal programs; and

“(vi) current funding resources across agencies.

“(C) The strategy for integrating commodity flow studies, mapping, and rail and hazardous materials databases for State and local emergency responders and increasing the rate of access to the individual responder in existing or emerging communications technology.

“(7) REPORT.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of the RESPONSE Act of 2016, the RESPONSE Subcommittee shall submit a report to the National Advisory Council that—

“(i) includes the recommendations developed under paragraph (6);

“(ii) specifies the timeframes for implementing any such recommendations that do not require congressional action; and

“(iii) identifies any such recommendations that do require congressional action.

“(B) REVIEW.—Not later than 30 days after receiving the report under subparagraph (A), the National Advisory Council shall begin a review of the report. The National Advisory Council may ask for additional clarification, changes, or other information from the RESPONSE Subcommittee to assist in the approval of the recommendations.

“(C) RECOMMENDATION.—Once the National Advisory Council approves the recommendations of the RESPONSE Subcommittee, the National Advisory Council shall submit the report to—

“(i) the co-chairpersons of the RESPONSE Subcommittee;

“(ii) the head of each other agency represented on the RESPONSE Subcommittee;

“(iii) the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate;

“(iv) the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate;

“(v) the Committee on Homeland Security of the House of Representatives; and

“(vi) the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives.

“(8) INTERIM ACTIVITY.—

“(A) UPDATES AND OVERSIGHT.—After the submission of the report by the National Advisory Council under paragraph (7), the Administrator shall—

“(i) provide annual updates to the congressional committees referred to in paragraph (7)(C) regarding the status of the implementation of the recommendations developed under paragraph (6); and

“(ii) coordinate the implementation of the recommendations described in paragraph (6)(G)(i), as appropriate.

“(B) SUNSET.—The requirements of subparagraph (A) shall terminate on the date that is 2 years after the date of the submission of the report required under paragraph (7)(A).

“(9) TERMINATION.—The RESPONSE Subcommittee shall terminate not later than 90 days after the submission of the report required under paragraph (7)(C).”

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. DENHAM) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. CAPUANO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on S. 546, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, rail safety is critical to the transport of goods and services throughout our country. As chairman of the Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials Subcommittee, I have consistently worked to improve the safety of transporting hazardous materials by rail, especially crude by rail.

In the Passenger Rail Reform and Investment Act of 2015, and later in the FAST Act, Congress required response plans and adopted strong national standards for transporting hazardous materials by rail. Additionally, the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee has held several hearings at

both the full committee and subcommittee level to examine how Congress can improve upon what is already a very safe rail network.

I personally have facilitated training for dozens of first responders in my district to ensure they are prepared to respond in the unlikely event of an accident involving hazardous materials transported by rail. Recently, I traveled with my good friends, Ranking Member CAPUANO and Congressman FARENTHOLD, to Colorado and the Transportation Technology Center to see how the first responder community trains for tank car accidents and the investments our Nation's freight railroad are making to build a safer network.

The bill before us today is an extension of these efforts to build and advance rail safety across our Nation. The RESPONSE Act tasks both government and nongovernmental experts to develop recommendations improving emergency responder training for hazardous materials incidents involving rail.

It requires the evaluation of a number of issues related to rail hazmat incidents, including the quality and application of training for local emergency first responders. Additionally, it looks at overlap in training and ways to modernize training for emergency responders, especially those in small communities near railroads.

This bill will further improve rail safety and enhance responses to rail hazmat incidents. I saw how important this hands-on training can be in August at the Transportation Technology Center in Pueblo. I believe that this bill will build upon the safety of our rail network in communities like mine.

Again, I want to thank the chairman, Mr. KIND, and Senator HEITKAMP for working on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CAPUANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill as well. I want to thank Ranking Member DENHAM, Chairman SHUSTER, and Ranking Member DEFazio for taking the lead on this bill.

Very simply, this is the simplest bill in the world, to be perfectly honest. It gets all the stakeholders together to simply take a look at the current responses we have when there is a disaster relative to rail accidents.

It gets them all in one room to take a look at best practices to figure out what they can do better and to see if resources are allocated well. It is not just Washington insiders. It includes people from the rail industry, people from the labor community, and people from the public safety community at local and State levels. It gets everybody at the table to do things that Congress is not equipped to do appropriately. We are not the safety experts; they are.

There is a time limit. This is not one of those endless committees that is

going to sit there forever. For 1 year, they get together, work it out amongst themselves, and come back with recommendations to us so that we can do our job well, which is to support the people actually suppressing these fires and maintaining the safety of our communities.

Again, I rise in support of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, this is a great bill. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. DENHAM) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 546, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

FRED D. THOMPSON FEDERAL BUILDING AND UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6135) to designate the Federal building and United States courthouse located at 719 Church Street in Nashville, Tennessee, as the "Fred D. Thompson Federal Building and United States Courthouse".

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6135

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. DESIGNATION.

The Federal building and United States courthouse located at 719 Church Street in Nashville, Tennessee, shall be known and designated as the "Fred D. Thompson Federal Building and United States Courthouse".

SEC. 2. REFERENCES.

Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the Federal building and United States courthouse referred to in section 1 shall be deemed to be a reference to the "Fred D. Thompson Federal Building and United States Courthouse".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. DENHAM) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. CAPUANO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on H.R. 6135.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 6135 would designate the Federal building and United States courthouse at 719 Church Street in Nashville, Tennessee, as the Fred D. Thompson Federal Building and United States Courthouse.

I would like to thank the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) for her leadership on this legislation.

Senator Thompson was an accomplished lawyer, actor, U.S. Senator, and a great friend. We spent numerous occasions together here in the Washington, D.C., area as he got to know new Members when we came in 2010. I have appreciated his counsel, his friendship, and I look forward to seeing this bill passed.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CAPUANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COHEN).

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to rise on this occasion to have the courthouse in Nashville named for a distinguished American, a friend of mine, Senator Fred Thompson, who is the only University of Memphis graduate to serve in the United States Senate.

Fred was an outstanding attorney and Federal employee. He made Tennessee proud when he was counsel to the Watergate Committee. In a phenomenal fashion, he gave people a good feeling about bipartisanship when a Republican such as Fred Thompson stood up and raised the questions that needed to be raised to end the illegal and crime-ridden episodes of Richard Nixon that were exposed in Watergate.

Despite the fact that Richard Nixon was a Republican, Fred Thompson saw to it that when the President acted in an untoward fashion, diminishing the Constitution, diminishing our government, all Americans should stand up and oppose such. Fred did it in an admirable way, and Richard Nixon resigned eventually, and Gerald Ford helped save our country. Vice Presidents can do that.

Fred served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney. He was a mentee of Senator Howard Baker, a great Member of the United States Senate and a great American. He was also a private-practicing attorney who had a case concerning pardons. It was a Democrat was doing things that were illegal. Ray Blanton from Tennessee was giving pardons that were improper. Marie Ragghianti stepped forward.

Fred Thompson wrote a book about Marie exposing illegal pardons. Somebody who did the script thought Fred could make a good actor. And Fred made a good actor. He did a lot of TV series and movies and had another ca-

reer besides politician and lawyer: actor.

He came to Memphis one time, I remember specifically, to speak to the Chamber. And he had a droll way about him. He said—and I guess he said it other places, as well—sometimes when I am in Washington, I miss the reality and the sincerity of Hollywood. Well, I laughed when Fred said it. I think about it often here.

When he ran for office, Fred took a little red truck and used it to campaign. He drove that truck around the State. People identified with it. He was ahead of his time. It was kind of like Donald Trump eating McDonald's, I think. He related to the common man with that truck.

I thought about Fred as I was flying up here. I just did get here in time. I was on one of the last of those regional jets, which was kind of like Fred's truck with wings on it. But we made it.

I want to thank Fred Thompson for all he did as an attorney, as an actor, and as a friend to me. He was bipartisan. He was always friendly to me. He was a courteous gentleman.

I came here when Fred won the National Conference of State Legislatures Award for looking out for States' rights. He was the only member of the Senate to vote on a bill that the NCSL was in favor of. And he was right. There was a province that belonged to the States that the Federal Government usurped because it was so wonderful to do and sets good brownie points back home. But Fred didn't do that. He stayed with his position that States' rights should be first and those areas of tort liability should have remained with the States. I came to see Fred get that award.

Fred had a wonderful wife and a wonderful family. One of his sons was a good friend of my mine. He still is. I am honored to be a sponsor of this bill. I am sorry that Fred left us, succumbing to cancer last year, but it is appropriate that we name the U.S. courthouse and Federal building in Nashville after this great American.

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN).

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from California for his work in moving this legislation forward and also my colleague from Tennessee for joining me on this bill. It is such an honor to bring it forward and to push for the naming of the Federal courthouse in Nashville as the Fred D. Thompson Federal Building and United States Courthouse.

You know, it is so interesting. Fred learned a lot about life and about the law working in the current Federal building. As that building has been outgrown and the need for a new one is in the works, it is so exciting to know that Fred's name will be emblazoned on that building. It is exciting for all of the residents of Lawrence County, Tennessee. That is where Fred grew up.