

not be forgotten. I urge my colleagues to join me in commemorating the lives of the crew and passengers of United Flight 93 with this national memorial in Somerset County, Pennsylvania.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Wyoming (Mrs. CUBIN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3917, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY WATER RESOURCES CONSERVATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF 2001

Mrs. CUBIN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2990) to amend the Lower Rio Grande Valley Water Resources Conservation and Improvement Act of 2000 to authorize additional projects under that Act, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2990

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 "Lower Rio Grande Valley Water Resources Conservation and Improvement Act of 2001".

SEC. 2. AUTHORIZATION OF ADDITIONAL PROJECTS UNDER THE LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY WATER RESOURCES CONSERVATION AND IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2000.

Section 4(a) of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Water Resources Conservation and Improvement Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-576; 114 Stat. 3067) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(5) In the United Irrigation District of Hidalgo County, Texas, a pipeline and pumping system as identified in the Sigler, Winston, Greenwood, Associates, Incorporated, study dated January 2001.

"(6) In the Cameron County, Texas, Irrigation District No. 2, proposed improvements to Canal C, as identified in the February 8, 2001, engineering report by Martin, Brown, and Perez.

"(7) In the Cameron County, Texas, Irrigation District No. 2, a proposed Canal C and Canal 13 Inner Connect, as identified in the February 12, 2001, engineering report by Martin, Brown, and Perez.

"(8) In Delta Lake Irrigation District of Hidalgo and Willacy Counties, Texas, proposed water conservation projects, as identified by the AW Blair Engineering report of February 13, 2001.

"(9) In the Hidalgo and Cameron County, Texas, Irrigation District No. 9, a proposed project to salvage spill water using automatic control of canal gates as identified in the AW Blair Engineering report dated February 14, 2001.

"(10) In the Brownsville Irrigation District of Cameron County, Texas, a proposed main canal replacement as outlined in the Holdar-Garcia & Associates engineering report dated February 14, 2001.

"(11) In the Hidalgo County, Texas, Irrigation District No. 16, a proposed off-district pump station project as identified by the Melden & Hunt,

Incorporated, engineering report dated February 14, 2001.

"(12) In the Hidalgo County, Texas, Irrigation District No. 1, a proposed canal replacement of the North Branch East Main, as outlined in the Melden & Hunt, Incorporated, engineering analysis dated February, 2001.

"(13) In the Donna (Texas) Irrigation District, a proposed improvement project as identified by the Melden & Hunt, Incorporated, engineering analysis dated February 13, 2001.

"(14) In the Hudspeth County, Texas, Conservation and Reclamation District No. 1, the Alamo Arroyo Pumping Plant water quality project as identified by the engineering report and drawings by Gebhard-Sarma and Associates dated July 1996 and the construction of a 1,000 acre-foot off-channel regulating reservoir for the capture and conservation of irrigation water, as identified in the engineering report by AW Blair Engineering dated June 2002.

"(15) In the El Paso County, Texas, Water Improvement District No. 1, the Riverside Canal Improvement Project Phase I Reach A, a canal lining and water conservation project as identified by the engineering report by AW Blair Engineering dated June 2002.

"(16) In the Maverick County, Texas, Water Improvement and Control District No. 1, the concrete lining project of 12 miles of the Maverick Main Canal, identified in the engineering report by AW Blair Engineering dated June 2002.

"(17) In the Hidalgo County, Texas, Irrigation District No. 6, rehabilitation of 10.2 miles of concrete lining in the main canal between Lift Stations Nos. 2 and 3 as identified in the engineering report by AW Blair Engineering dated June 2002.

"(18) In the Hidalgo County, Texas, Irrigation District No. 2, Wisconsin Canal Improvements as identified in the Sigler, Winston, Greenwood & Associates, Incorporated, engineering report dated February 2001.

"(19) In the Hidalgo County, Texas, Irrigation District No. 2, Lateral 'A' Canal Improvements as identified in the Sigler, Winston, Greenwood & Associates, Incorporated, engineering report dated July 25, 2001."

SEC. 3. AMENDMENTS TO THE LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY WATER RESOURCES CONSERVATION AND IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2000.

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Water Resources Conservation and Improvement Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-576; 114 Stat. 3065 et seq.) is further amended as follows:

(1) Section 3(a) is amended in the first sentence by striking "The Secretary" and all that follows through "in cooperation" and inserting "The Secretary, acting through the Bureau of Reclamation, shall undertake a program under cooperative agreements".

(2) Section 3(b) is amended to read as follows:

"(b) PROJECT REVIEW.—Project proposals shall be reviewed and evaluated under the guidelines set forth in the document published by the Bureau of Reclamation entitled 'Guidelines for Preparing and Reviewing Proposals for Water Conservation and Improvement Projects Under P.L. 106-576', dated June 2001."

(3) Section 3(d) is amended by inserting before the period at the end the following: ", including operation, maintenance, repair, and replacement".

(4) Section 3(e) is amended by striking "the criteria established pursuant to this section" and inserting "the guidelines referred to in subsection (b)".

(5) Subsection (f) of section 3 is amended by striking "to prepare" and all that follows through the end of the subsection and inserting "to have the Secretary prepare the reports required under this section. The Federal share of the cost of such preparation by the Secretary shall not exceed 50 percent of the total cost of such preparation."

(6) Section 3(g) is amended by striking "\$2,000,000" and inserting "\$8,000,000".

(7) Section 4(b) is amended—

(A) in the first sentence by striking "costs of any construction" and inserting "total project cost of any project"; and

(B) in the last sentence by inserting "the actual" before "funds".

(8) Section 4(c) is amended by striking "\$10,000,000" and inserting "\$47,000,000 (2001 dollars)".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Wyoming (Mrs. CUBIN) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Wyoming (Mrs. CUBIN).

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2990, the Lower Rio Grande Valley Water Resources Conservation and Improvement Act of 2001, will amend Public Law 106-576. This legislation adds 14 new water conservation projects, increases study authorizations from \$2 million to \$8 million, and increases facility construction authorizations from \$10 million to \$47 million.

The Rio Grande has been severely impacted, as have most areas in the west, by drought conditions during the last decade. Many of these drought conditions are the worse that have ever been seen, at least recorded. These droughts conditions have made it difficult to supply Rio Grande water to the 7 million people who depend on it. Implementation of significant improvements to irrigation canal delivery systems, aggressive water conservation programs, and improved water management are critical needs that must be taken seriously. H.R. 2990 will work within the existing framework of Public Law 106-576 to address these critical needs.

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

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

(Mr. ORTIZ asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Speaker, first, let me thank my colleagues on the Committee on Resources, particularly the gentleman from California (Mr. CALVERT) who has been a local hero back home in South Texas for his interest and work on this bill. South Texas also would like to thank the gentleman from Utah (Mr. HANSEN) and the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. RAHALL) for their attention to our situation and understanding, and their willingness to move this urgent bill forward. I also want to thank the staff. We had an opportunity to travel to my district, and we had hearings.

The South Texan who deserves great credit for House consideration today is the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BONILLA), our distinguished appropriations cardinal whose personal involvement in this legislation has been pivotal to our success today. The gentleman from Texas (Mr. BONILLA) and I co-chair the House Border Caucus, and he is an important player for all of us

when it comes to issues affecting the southwest border.

Mr. Speaker, nature, or El Nino or La Nina, has played a cruel joke on Texas. After a decade of drought in South Texas, Mother Nature dumped between 30 and 40 inches of rain on central Texas which caused a lot of flooding and a lot of damage, none of which made its way to our reservoirs in South Texas.

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Water Conservation and Improvement Act of 2001 will authorize \$47 million to be managed by the State of Texas to improve the irrigation system in the South Texas area. The bill specifies water transportation and conservation activities. It also begins to implement some of the water conservation measures considered in the development of the State of Texas water plan.

We have been hit hard by at least 6 years of drought, and have raced to find ways to conserve this amount of water. We have to save as much as we can. This bill is an outgrowth of a very serious international treaty violation by Mexico. In 1944, the United States and Mexico signed a water treaty to share the waters of the Rio Grande, the Colorado, and their tributaries.

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Under the treaty, the United States delivers 1.5 million acre-feet of water to Mexico from the Colorado while Mexico delivers 350,000 acre-feet of water to the United States from tributaries and reservoirs of the Rio Grande. I represent the Texas border communities at the downstream of the river. The last drop and the last stop of water is in my district.

There is very little that we can do to help south Texas water users today. But passing this bill to authorize improvements to the existing irrigation systems in the area will help conserve the tiny bit of water that we do now have. The gentleman from California (Mr. CALVERT) led the Committee on Resources in a hearing in south Texas. He saw and heard firsthand the need that we have to improve the existing infrastructure in south Texas. Californians, and others from the American Southwest, have a special understanding of water needs and droughts; and we will be standing together with our colleagues from California as we try to mitigate the circumstances we now find ourselves in.

I and all south Texas water users are deeply grateful to all the players in the House who have heard our plea for help and have stepped up to the plate to do what we need to do to make this horrible situation a little better. I want to thank my good friend, the gentleman from Wyoming, for being a lot of help in contributing to the passage of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA).

(Mr. HINOJOSA asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 2990. I want to thank the gentleman from California (Mr. CALVERT), subcommittee chairman; the gentleman from Utah (Mr. HANSEN), the full committee chairman; as well as the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. RAHALL); the gentlewoman from Wyoming (Mrs. CUBIN); the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SMITH); and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ) for all of their help in moving our legislation to the House floor.

South Texas has reached a crisis stage. A decade-long drought combined with a 1.5 million acre-feet water debt owed by Mexico has left our water reservoirs dangerously low at only 25 percent of capacity. As a result, south Texas farmers have lost much of their crops. Our farmers are unable to plant new ones and are losing their farms because bank loans are being called. The sustainable growth of the region is in jeopardy.

Agriculture has long been a cornerstone of the south Texas economy, and the devastating effects of the drought upon farmers are rippling throughout the entire economy in our country. Economists have estimated that the water shortage has cost the Texas economy almost \$1 billion in the last 10 years, and costs are now mounting at a pace of more than \$400 million annually. This means that south Texas has lost thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in economic activity. Given our chronic double-digit unemployment rate along the border, these are simply jobs that we cannot afford to lose. The agricultural and economic losses are not the only areas in which the drought has had a serious negative effect.

The environmental negative impact has been felt as well. The Rio Grande River no longer flows into the Gulf of Mexico, which has adversely impacted a number of economically and ecologically important marine species. It is quite clear that the drought, compounded by Mexico's refusal to comply with the terms of the 1944 water treaty, is having a devastating effect upon all aspects of our community. We must continue our efforts to press Mexico to deliver the water that is owed us, but we must also be more efficient in transporting what little irrigation water we have.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that in his most recent agreement with Mexico, the President has promised to fund water conservation projects in Mexico and the U.S. The projects authorized in our bill, H.R. 2990, are the type of conservation projects that will go a long way towards helping us modernize our antiquated water delivery systems on the U.S. side of the border. Currently, we lose up to 35 percent of our water to evaporation and to seepage. This legislation would allow the Bureau of Reclamation to conduct these planned projects that would significantly im-

prove conservation of our scarce water resources.

Specifically, this bill authorizes \$47 million in new funding for water conservation and infrastructure improvement projects along the Texas/Mexico border from Brownsville to McAllen to Laredo to El Paso, Texas.

These are badly needed financial resources that will be an important investment in the future of the South Texas border region.

In closing, let me say that after holding several hearings, including field hearings in Weslaco and Brownsville, Texas, this bill was approved unanimously by both the Subcommittee on Water and Power and the full Committee on Resources. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2990.

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

I would just like to point out how cruel at times Mother Nature can be. There is flooding in Texas at the same time very nearby there is a drought that has been going on for 6 years. I also want everyone to know that we are very aware that there is a drought all the way across the West. The drought conditions in my own State of Wyoming are the worst that we have ever seen. It is that way throughout the West. Now that we are faced with the wildfires that we have, the drought becomes all the more significant in environmental issues and in the health of our public lands.

This is just the beginning. I believe that the Congress will be here to help other people in other States with the drought. But this particular bill is very important because it involves an international treaty and it involves water that is available, but we simply have to be able to save and use in a more efficient way the water that is there. In my own State, it is lack of water. Period. But the Congress will be there to help those people as this session goes on.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ) and add my support and the committee's support for his hard work, for the field hearings that they have had. This bill has been vetted extremely well through the House. It does deserve to be passed. We do need to start dealing with the issues of the drought.

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

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

This is truly a very bipartisan bill. We ask Members to vote for this bill. It is very important. It will help those people who have lost a lot of money in south Texas because they have not been able to irrigate and grow a crop.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BENTSEN).

(Mr. BENTSEN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 2990, the Lower Rio Grand Valley Water Resources Conservation and Improvement

Act, legislation sponsored by our colleagues along the U.S.-Mexico border, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA), the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BONILLA), the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GONZALEZ), the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ), the gentleman from Texas (Mr. REYES), and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ).

The legislation will authorize 14 irrigation improvement projects necessary for the continued viability and prosperity of farmers throughout the lower Rio Grand region. Eight of these projects will improve irrigation in Hidalgo County; three will help Cameron County; others will help Maverick County, El Paso County, and Hudspeth County.

Farmers in the lower Rio Grand Valley are being hit hard by both an international dispute over water obligations with Mexico and a serious 8-year drought, the longest on record in the valley region. For anyone needing proof for this desperation of valley farmers, I advise them to visit the mouth of the Rio Grand River where the flow has ceased to reach the Gulf of Mexico twice in the last 2 years and often only manages a trickle. The land in the lower Rio Grande Valley is among the most fertile, producing cotton, grains, vegetables, citrus, including the legendary pink grapefruit.

However, without water, farmers have accumulated billions in losses and tens of thousands of jobs have been lost. While drought has and always will challenge farmers, those in the lower Rio Grande Valley have had more than 1.5 million acre feet of water, or an incredible 488 billion gallons of water, withheld from them by the Mexican state of Chihuahua since 1992. At the same time, the state of Chihuahua has used this U.S. water to produce crops of their own in the desert. This violation of the 1944 U.S.-Mexico treaty regarding the Rio Grande and Colorado Rivers is admitted by the Mexican authorities and no party claims that the U.S. has ever failed in its reciprocal obligation to provide water to Mexico from the Colorado River.

While I consider Mexico to be a friend and strong ally of the United States, I have consistently argued that the State Department needs to resolve this issue of great importance to the economy of the lower Rio Grande Valley before moving on to other more controversial foreign policy issues between the United States and Mexico.

The matter of Mexico's adherence to the 1944 treaty and mounting water debt should be the Bush administration's top bilateral priority with respect to Mexico. Unfortunately, the administration's efforts to date have been deficient, as has been shown by the recent signing of the wholly inadequate water deal known as Minute 308.

A minute is a clarification to an existing treaty but is not a formal amendment. Signed by the representatives of the United States and Mexican governments to the International

Boundary and Water Commission on June 28, 2002, Minute 308 calls for improved water infrastructure in Mexico and the U.S., but it makes no meaningful attempt to address the mounting water debt that Mexico is accumulating.

Farmers in the lower Rio Grande Valley, while welcoming any attention to this issue, have overwhelmingly rejected Minute 308 as close to useless. I am disappointed that the U.S. representatives to the commission, who were in direct communication with high ranking administration officials, would not force stronger action.

With each passing day of inadequate administration action, the risk increases that this mounting debt will not be repaid, and more and more Texas farmers watch as their crops wither and die under the hot Texas sun.

Mr. Speaker, the twin factors of drought and politics have hit valley farmers hard. All are praying simultaneously for a good rain and a resolution of the dispute before the latest deadline of September 30, 2002. Even if this deadline is met, it will be too late for many. In the meantime, valley farmers will be encouraged that this House is coming to their aid by increasing the irrigation opportunities in the region throughout this legislation before us today. However, the administration needs to hear our debate today and to make sure that we have some water to use in these important projects.

I want to thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA) for introducing this legislation. I encourage my colleagues to vote "yes" in suspending the rules and passing H.R. 2990, the Lower Rio Grande Valley Water Resources Conservation and Improvement Act.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to offer my full support for passage of HR 2990, the Lower Rio Grande Valley Water Resources Conservation and Improvement Act of 2001. This bill would authorize additional projects critical to the improvement of water quality and infrastructures in South Texas while encouraging the federal government to focus more resources on the border region.

South Texas faces a grave water crisis. Even as counties to the north suffer from flooding that has caused millions of dollars in damage to businesses and homes, the border region suffers from a terrible lack of water. It is evident that we need to take a long, hard look at our water management practices and find new ways to improve our water resources.

In the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, communities continue to battle with an eight-year drought. The land is parched. The crops have died. The Rio Grande River has literally stopped flowing into the Gulf of Mexico. How can I express the seriousness of the situation to my colleagues? The lack of water in South Texas has all but destroyed the way of life for the farmers and ranchers of the region.

During this same time period, Mexico has accumulated a substantial water deficit. Under terms of the 1944 U.S.-Mexico Water Treaty, Mexico now owes us close to 1.7 million acre-feet of water. This is water that could have provided enormous relief to South Texas.

Farmers and water district managers had held out hope that Mexico would release a portion of water owed so they could make it through the summer.

We were recently informed that the Administration had struck a deal with Mexico for the release of a mere 90,000 acre-feet. As South Texans have said, this is too little water, too late. To add insult to injury, the agreement gives Mexico access to substantial loans without requiring a firm payment schedule for water still owed. While we need substantial investment on both sides of the border to improve our water resources, we need Mexico to meet its treaty obligations to offer immediate relief to the parched lands of the Texas Valley.

We have a real opportunity to provide some needed relief today. HR 2990 will direct badly needed resources to South Texas to improve water quality and infrastructure. I ask for my colleagues support of this important bill.

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Wyoming (Mrs. CUBIN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2990, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. CUBIN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials in the RECORD on the six bills just considered: H.R. 4870, H.R. 3258, H.R. 3401, H.R. 3048, H.R. 2990, and H.R. 3917.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Wyoming?

There was no objection.

VETERANS HEALTH CARE AND PROCUREMENT IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2002

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3645) to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for improved procurement practices by the Department of Veterans Affairs in procuring health-care items, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3645

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the "Veterans Health Care and Procurement Improvement Act of 2002".

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

Sec. 2. References to title 38, United States Code.