

This bill would also require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a program to develop and disseminate model education and training programs on the medical responses to terrorist activities. The VA's infrastructure, which includes affiliation with over 107 medical schools, and other schools of health professions, would enable current and future medical professionals in this country to be knowledgeable and medically competent in the treatment of casualties from terrorist attacks. Our bill provides the VA a formal role in the national disaster medical system and authorizes the VA to treat first responders, active duty forces, firefighters, police officers and members of the general public that may be victims of terrorism or other mass casualty disasters.

With this bill, the VA health care professionals will be properly armed with information and education on bioterrorism response. Mechanisms will be put in place to study the likely avenues and methods of chemical, biological, and radiological poisoning; and the VA will be part of the rapid response by Federal, State, and local officials in types of emergencies that only a year ago we could scarcely imagine.

H.R. 3253 is a bipartisan and bicameral compromise; and, Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this effort in America's war on terrorism.

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

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I just want to begin by thanking my very good friend and colleague, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS), for his work on this legislation. We have served together on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs for longer than 20 years; and he as been a true advocate for veterans, and on this legislation, like on the others, has been a great friend and ally as we work in tandem to try to bring good, solid pieces of legislation to the floor. So I want to thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS) for that good work.

I want to thank Michael Durishin and Susan Edgerton, who are two of his top staffers, who again worked very, very tirelessly with our own staff here on the majority side; and again, these bills, the details of which are very much worked over and vetted, would not happen without that kind of cooperation. So I do want to thank them as well.

The gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), who just spoke, and the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER), the chairman and the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Health, and the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER) also, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, worked on this legislation as well; and I want to thank them.

I want to thank our own staff, Pat Ryan, Kingston Smith, Jeannie

McNally, Peter Dickinson, Kathleen Greve and John Bradley, who all had input into this legislation, and, we have held hearings on it. One of them was one of those day-long hearings. We had four panels. We heard from experts, and again, I think we all were astonished at the lack of response when it came to these capabilities.

As I alluded to earlier in my comments, I thought when I sat in those meetings in Trenton and Hamilton and Mercer County, where there was this befuddled look on the part of very well-meaning experts in the field about what do we do about anthrax, has it been spread through cross-contamination, what are the risks, how often and how long and to whom should Cipro or Doxycycline be administered.

There were a million and one questions and very few answers because those questions had not been considered in advance; and that is what this legislation is all about, to establish centers of excellence that seek to find out, if this kind of event happens, what is prescribed, what is the consequence. Just today in *The Washington Times*, there was an excellent op-ed piece by a doctor who heads up the emergency room physicians, pointing out that the first responders, as they rush in to help in a situation, smallpox, anthrax, sarin, just name it, will not have a clue what it is they need to do to prepare themselves, to protect themselves and preclude contamination.

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So it is very important that these details be worked out in advance, coordinating with other agencies of the government. The VA has shown in the past it has a unique perspective and an expertise to bring to bear on this.

Madam Speaker, I also thank our Senate colleagues. Senator ROCKEFELLER worked on this and got legislation passed. It was a very cooperative effort. They added some very meaningful language to the bill, so we ended up with a very good hybrid that will go to the President for signature. I also thank Senator SPECTER, the ranking member. In addition, I appreciate the efforts of the Senate staff, Bill Tuerk and Kim Lipsky, David Goetz and Bill Cahill, and I especially thank Julie Fischer, who has been Senator ROCKEFELLER's top aide, who worked with the other side of the aisle to craft a good bill. This bill has been endorsed by the administration. Now we will work on getting this bill signed, implemented, and then we will do oversight on its implementation.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the amended version of H.R. 3253, the Emergency Preparedness Act. As an original co-sponsor of H.R. 3253, I recognize the significant role the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) can play in our quest as a nation to restore a sense of security following the horrific events of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent anthrax attacks. This measure would authorize the VA to become a full partner in our defense efforts through the estab-

lishment of four "Medical Emergency Preparedness Centers" at VA hospitals throughout the nation.

These centers would be charged with conducting medical research, and developing health care responses for chemical, biological, radiological, incendiary and explosive threats to the public. The centers would also provide education, training, and advice to VA and outside doctors, and other health care professionals on how to diagnose and treat illnesses caused by exposure to chemical, biological and radioactive materials. Especially important is the role the proposed centers would play in providing rapid response assistance and other aid to local health care authorities in the event of a national emergency.

This legislation recognizes the critical role the VA can play in our homeland security efforts. The VA operates the nation's largest integrated health care network with over 20,000 health care professionals, 163 medical centers, 800 outpatient clinics, 115 medical research centers, and has affiliations with more than 100 medical schools. Several VA facilities have already initiated efforts to serve our country in this effort. For example, the Audie Murphy Memorial Hospital in San Antonio, has developed relationships and shared teaching and research arrangements with various medical school in Texas and the county hospital system. Audie Murphy also works closely with several military medical missions with expertise in chemical, biological and radiological hazards.

The collaborative efforts of veterans health care providers, like Audie Murphy Hospital, not only help veterans, but our nation as a whole. Further, it puts the VA in a critical position to attract high level scientists in fields relevant to bio-chemical and radiological threats. I believe that through the development of National Emergency Preparedness Centers, the VA can become an important partner in our nation's homeland defense efforts.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 526.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

NATIONAL CONSTRUCTION SAFETY TEAM ACT

Mr. BOEHLERT. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendment to the bill (H.R. 4687) to provide for the establishment of investigative teams to assess building performance and the emergency response and evacuation procedures in the wake of any building failure that has resulted in substantial loss of life or that posed significant potential of substantial loss of life.

The Clerk read as follows:

Senate amendment: Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “National Construction Safety Team Act”.

SEC. 2. NATIONAL CONSTRUCTION SAFETY TEAMS.

(a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—The Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (in this Act referred to as the “Director”) is authorized to establish National Construction Safety Teams (in this Act referred to as a “Team”) for deployment after events causing the failure of a building or buildings that has resulted in substantial loss of life or that posed significant potential for substantial loss of life. To the maximum extent practicable, the Director shall establish and deploy a Team within 48 hours after such an event. The Director shall promptly publish in the Federal Register notice of the establishment of each Team.

(b) **PURPOSE OF INVESTIGATION; DUTIES.**—

(1) **PURPOSE.**—The purpose of investigations by Teams is to improve the safety and structural integrity of buildings in the United States.

(2) **DUTIES.**—A Team shall—

(A) establish the likely technical cause or causes of the building failure;

(B) evaluate the technical aspects of evacuation and emergency response procedures;

(C) recommend, as necessary, specific improvements to building standards, codes, and practices based on the findings made pursuant to subparagraphs (A) and (B); and

(D) recommend any research and other appropriate actions needed to improve the structural safety of buildings, and improve evacuation and emergency response procedures, based on the findings of the investigation.

(c) **PROCEDURES.**—

(1) **DEVELOPMENT.**—Not later than 3 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director, in consultation with the United States Fire Administration and other appropriate Federal agencies, shall develop procedures for the establishment and deployment of Teams. The Director shall update such procedures as appropriate. Such procedures shall include provisions—

(A) regarding conflicts of interest related to service on the Team;

(B) defining the circumstances under which the Director will establish and deploy a Team;

(C) prescribing the appropriate size of Teams;

(D) guiding the disclosure of information under section 8;

(E) guiding the conduct of investigations under this Act, including procedures for providing written notice of inspection authority under section 4(a) and for ensuring compliance with any other applicable law;

(F) identifying and prescribing appropriate conditions for the provision by the Director of additional resources and services Teams may need;

(G) to ensure that investigations under this Act do not impede and are coordinated with any search and rescue efforts being undertaken at the site of the building failure;

(H) for regular briefings of the public on the status of the investigative proceedings and findings;

(I) guiding the Teams in moving and preserving evidence as described in section 4 (a)(4), (b)(2), and (d)(4);

(J) providing for coordination with Federal, State, and local entities that may sponsor research or investigations of building failures, including research conducted under the Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act of 1977; and

(K) regarding such other issues as the Director considers appropriate.

(2) **PUBLICATION.**—The Director shall publish promptly in the Federal Register final procedures, and subsequent updates thereof, developed under paragraph (1).

SEC. 3. COMPOSITION OF TEAMS.

Each Team shall be composed of individuals selected by the Director and led by an indi-

vidual designated by the Director. Team members shall include at least 1 employee of the National Institute of Standards and Technology and shall include other experts who are not employees of the National Institute of Standards and Technology, who may include private sector experts, university experts, representatives of professional organizations with appropriate expertise, and appropriate Federal, State, or local officials. Team members who are not Federal employees shall be considered Federal Government contractors.

SEC. 4. AUTHORITIES.

(a) **ENTRY AND INSPECTION.**—In investigating a building failure under this Act, members of a Team, and any other person authorized by the Director to support a Team, on display of appropriate credentials provided by the Director and written notice of inspection authority, may—

(1) enter property where a building failure being investigated has occurred, or where building components, materials, and artifacts with respect to the building failure are located, and take action necessary, appropriate, and reasonable in light of the nature of the property to be inspected to carry out the duties of the Team under section 2(b)(2) (A) and (B);

(2) during reasonable hours, inspect any record (including any design, construction, or maintenance record), process, or facility related to the investigation;

(3) inspect and test any building components, materials, and artifacts related to the building failure; and

(4) move such records, components, materials, and artifacts as provided by the procedures developed under section 2(c)(1).

(b) **AVOIDING UNNECESSARY INTERFERENCE AND PRESERVING EVIDENCE.**—An inspection, test, or other action taken by a Team under this section shall be conducted in a way that—

(1) does not interfere unnecessarily with services provided by the owner or operator of the building components, materials, or artifacts, property, records, process, or facility; and

(2) to the maximum extent feasible, preserves evidence related to the building failure, consistent with the ongoing needs of the investigation.

(c) **COORDINATION.**—

(1) **WITH SEARCH AND RESCUE EFFORTS.**—A Team shall not impede, and shall coordinate its investigation with, any search and rescue efforts being undertaken at the site of the building failure.

(2) **WITH OTHER RESEARCH.**—A Team shall coordinate its investigation, to the extent practicable, with qualified researchers who are conducting engineering or scientific (including social science) research relating to the building failure.

(3) **MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING.**—The National Institute of Standards and Technology shall enter into a memorandum of understanding with each Federal agency that may conduct or sponsor a related investigation, providing for coordination of investigations.

(4) **WITH STATE AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES.**—A Team shall cooperate with State and local authorities carrying out any activities related to a Team's investigation.

(d) **INTERAGENCY PRIORITIES.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Except as provided in paragraph (2) or (3), a Team investigation shall have priority over any other investigation of any other Federal agency.

(2) **NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD.**—If the National Transportation Safety Board is conducting an investigation related to an investigation of a Team, the National Transportation Safety Board investigation shall have priority over the Team investigation. Such priority shall not otherwise affect the authority of the Team to continue its investigation under this Act.

(3) **CRIMINAL ACTS.**—If the Attorney General, in consultation with the Director, determines,

and notifies the Director, that circumstances reasonably indicate that the building failure being investigated by a Team may have been caused by a criminal act, the Team shall relinquish investigative priority to the appropriate law enforcement agency. The relinquishment of investigative priority by the Team shall not otherwise affect the authority of the Team to continue its investigation under this Act.

(4) **PRESERVATION OF EVIDENCE.**—If a Federal law enforcement agency suspects and notifies the Director that a building failure being investigated by a Team under this Act may have been caused by a criminal act, the Team, in consultation with the Federal law enforcement agency, shall take necessary actions to ensure that evidence of the criminal act is preserved.

SEC. 5. BRIEFINGS, HEARINGS, WITNESSES, AND SUBPOENAS.

(a) **GENERAL AUTHORITY.**—The Director or his designee, on behalf of a Team, may conduct hearings, administer oaths, and require, by subpoena (pursuant to subsection (e)) and otherwise, necessary witnesses and evidence as necessary to carry out this Act.

(b) **BRIEFINGS.**—The Director or his designee (who may be the leader or a member of a Team), on behalf of a Team, shall hold regular public briefings on the status of investigative proceedings and findings, including a final briefing after the report required by section 8 is issued.

(c) **PUBLIC HEARINGS.**—During the course of an investigation by a Team, the National Institute of Standards and Technology may, if the Director considers it to be in the public interest, hold a public hearing for the purposes of—

(1) gathering testimony from witnesses; and

(2) informing the public on the progress of the investigation.

(d) **PRODUCTION OF WITNESSES.**—A witness or evidence in an investigation under this Act may be summoned or required to be produced from any place in the United States. A witness summoned under this subsection is entitled to the same fee and mileage the witness would have been paid in a court of the United States.

(e) **ISSUANCE OF SUBPOENAS.**—A subpoena shall be issued only under the signature of the Director but may be served by any person designated by the Director.

(f) **FAILURE TO OBEY SUBPOENA.**—If a person disobeys a subpoena issued by the Director under this Act, the Attorney General, acting on behalf of the Director, may bring a civil action in a district court of the United States to enforce the subpoena. An action under this subsection may be brought in the judicial district in which the person against whom the action is brought resides, is found, or does business. The court may punish a failure to obey an order of the court to comply with the subpoena as a contempt of court.

SEC. 6. ADDITIONAL POWERS.

In order to support Teams in carrying out this Act, the Director may—

(1) procure the temporary or intermittent services of experts or consultants under section 3109 of title 5, United States Code;

(2) request the use, when appropriate, of available services, equipment, personnel, and facilities of a department, agency, or instrumentality of the United States Government on a reimbursable or other basis;

(3) confer with employees and request the use of services, records, and facilities of State and local governmental authorities;

(4) accept voluntary and uncompensated services;

(5) accept and use gifts of money and other property, to the extent provided in advance in appropriations Acts;

(6) make contracts with nonprofit entities to carry out studies related to purpose, functions, and authorities of the Teams; and

(7) provide nongovernmental members of the Team reasonable compensation for time spent carrying out activities under this Act.

SEC. 7. DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION.

(a) **GENERAL RULE.**—Except as otherwise provided in this section, a copy of a record, information, or investigation submitted or received by a Team shall be made available to the public on request and at reasonable cost.

(b) **EXCEPTIONS.**—Subsection (a) does not require the release of—

(1) information described by section 552(b) of title 5, United States Code, or protected from disclosure by any other law of the United States; or

(2) information described in subsection (a) by the National Institute of Standards and Technology or by a Team until the report required by section 8 is issued.

(c) **PROTECTION OF VOLUNTARY SUBMISSION OF INFORMATION.**—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a Team, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, and any agency receiving information from a Team or the National Institute of Standards and Technology, shall not disclose voluntarily provided safety-related information if that information is not directly related to the building failure being investigated and the Director finds that the disclosure of the information would inhibit the voluntary provision of that type of information.

(d) **PUBLIC SAFETY INFORMATION.**—A Team and the National Institute of Standards and Technology shall not publicly release any information it receives in the course of an investigation under this Act if the Director finds that the disclosure of that information might jeopardize public safety.

SEC. 8. NATIONAL CONSTRUCTION SAFETY TEAM REPORT.

Not later than 90 days after completing an investigation, a Team shall issue a public report which includes—

(1) an analysis of the likely technical cause or causes of the building failure investigated;

(2) any technical recommendations for changes to or the establishment of evacuation and emergency response procedures;

(3) any recommended specific improvements to building standards, codes, and practices; and

(4) recommendations for research and other appropriate actions needed to help prevent future building failures.

SEC. 9. NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STANDARDS AND TECHNOLOGY ACTIONS.

After the issuance of a public report under section 8, the National Institute of Standards and Technology shall comprehensively review the report and, working with the United States Fire Administration and other appropriate Federal and non-Federal agencies and organizations—

(1) conduct, or enable or encourage the conducting of, appropriate research recommended by the Team; and

(2) promote (consistent with existing procedures for the establishment of building standards, codes, and practices) the appropriate adoption by the Federal Government, and encourage the appropriate adoption by other agencies and organizations, of the recommendations of the Team with respect to—

(A) technical aspects of evacuation and emergency response procedures;

(B) specific improvements to building standards, codes, and practices; and

(C) other actions needed to help prevent future building failures.

SEC. 10. NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STANDARDS AND TECHNOLOGY ANNUAL REPORT.

Not later than February 15 of each year, the Director shall transmit to the Committee on Science of the House of Representatives and to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate a report that includes—

(1) a summary of the investigations conducted by Teams during the prior fiscal year;

(2) a summary of recommendations made by the Teams in reports issued under section 8 dur-

ing the prior fiscal year and a description of the extent to which those recommendations have been implemented; and

(3) a description of the actions taken to improve building safety and structural integrity by the National Institute of Standards and Technology during the prior fiscal year in response to reports issued under section 8.

SEC. 11. ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

(a) **ESTABLISHMENT AND FUNCTIONS.**—The Director, in consultation with the United States Fire Administration and other appropriate Federal agencies, shall establish an advisory committee to advise the Director on carrying out this Act and to review the procedures developed under section 2(c)(1) and the reports issued under section 8.

(b) **ANNUAL REPORT.**—On January 1 of each year, the advisory committee shall transmit to the Committee on Science of the House of Representatives and to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate a report that includes—

(1) an evaluation of Team activities, along with recommendations to improve the operation and effectiveness of Teams; and

(2) an assessment of the implementation of the recommendations of Teams and of the advisory committee.

(c) **DURATION OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE.**—Section 14 of the Federal Advisory Committee Act shall not apply to the advisory committee established under this section.

SEC. 12. ADDITIONAL APPLICABILITY.

The authorities and restrictions applicable under this Act to the Director and to Teams shall apply to the activities of the National Institute of Standards and Technology in response to the attacks of September 11, 2001.

SEC. 13. AMENDMENT.

Section 7 of the National Bureau of Standards Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1986 (15 U.S.C. 281a) is amended by inserting “, or from an investigation under the National Construction Safety Team Act,” after “from such investigation”.

SEC. 14. CONSTRUCTION.

Nothing in this Act shall be construed to confer any authority on the National Institute of Standards and Technology to require the adoption of building standards, codes, or practices.

SEC. 15. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

The National Institute of Standards and Technology is authorized to use funds otherwise authorized by law to carry out this Act.

The **SPEAKER pro tempore**. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. BOEHLERT) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. WEINER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. BOEHLERT).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BOEHLERT. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4687.

The **SPEAKER pro tempore**. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, I am honored to bring this bill back to the House so we can pass it and send it on to the President for his signature. Last week the Members of the House, like citizens

throughout our Nation, set aside time to remember the events and heroes and victims of last September 11. We re-experienced the shock and horror of that day, and we gave thanks for our liberties and the way our Nation spontaneously came together to provide emergency, emotional and financial support to those people and places that needed it.

But that is not enough. Our responses to September 11 cannot be limited to sentiment. We have to learn from what happened that day, and apply those lessons. Most of the lessons, of course, relate to foreign policy and domestic security, and it is often difficult to discern exactly what those lessons ought to be once one goes beyond enhanced vigilance, but there are also lessons related to building safety, and at least the immediate lessons in that area are crystal clear.

The collapse of the Twin Towers, and especially the emergency response and evacuation procedures in response to the attack on the Towers, indicates that we need to know more about skyscraper safety. The government study that followed the collapse showed that we need to have better procedures in place to study building failures, from whatever cause, if we are going to save lives in the future.

The attack on the World Trade Center is, we hope, unique. But the collapse of those two seemingly immovable objects has lessons for a wide variety of buildings facing a wide variety of relatively common circumstances.

H.R. 4687, which I introduced along with the gentleman from New York (Mr. WEINER), will ensure that we are able to learn and apply those lessons, not only in the case of the World Trade Center, but in future cases as well.

The bill simply and precisely remedies each and every failing that hindered the investigation of the World Trade Center collapse. The bill gives clear responsibility and authority, including subpoena power, to the National Institute of Standards and Technology to use its longstanding expertise, and that of outside experts, to investigate failures of structures and evacuation procedures, and to make specific recommendations to prevent their recurrence. The bill ensures that NIST's response will be swift and thorough.

This bill has already passed the House overwhelmingly, and we have negotiated clarifying changes with the Senate. The bill is ready for the President, and it will be a fitting memorial to those who perished last year at this time.

Madam Speaker, I thank the families of those who died at the Trade Center, especially those who have formed the Skyscraper Safety Campaign, for all their hard work in helping to bring this measure to fruition. We are working together to ensure that no other families will ever have to experience their particular pain.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.