

Moreover, the Ocean Commission's report echoed similar findings and recommendations to those made in the 2003 report released by the independent Pew Oceans Commission, chaired by our former colleague, the Honorable Leon Panetta.

If there was anything that these reports conveyed, it is that this is a pressing national problem.

Unfortunately, rather than rolling up our sleeves and working in a bi-partisan fashion to begin a process of genuine oversight to evaluate the merits of the Ocean Commission's work, months have been allowed to lapse with little, if any, meaningful oversight; without the development of any joint strategy; and absent any leadership by the Republican majority.

I, along with Members from both sides of the aisle, have introduced legislation to implement several of the Commission's recommendations. My legislation, for example, addresses fisheries management, including how the various fisheries management councils can perform in a more transparent and effective manner.

But instead of debating these substantive proposals, the majority leadership trots out a resolution to create a toothless Task Force on Ocean Policy which will only waste precious time.

This is a classic stalling tactic of government—to study an issue to death. Sadly, our oceans could be on life support before this Republican-led Congress acts to implement the Commission's recommendations.

I urge members to support true oversight of the Ocean Commission's recommendations and to oppose this misguided resolution.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TERRY). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCREST) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 599.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of the group present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

#### COAST GUARD HURRICANE RELIEF ACT OF 2005

Mr. LOBIONDO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4508) to commend the outstanding efforts in response to Hurricane Katrina by members and employees of the Coast Guard, to provide temporary relief to certain persons affected by such hurricane with respect to certain laws administered by the Coast Guard, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4508

*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 "Coast Guard Hurricane Relief Act of 2005".

#### SEC. 2. COMMENDATION, RECOGNITION, AND THANKS FOR COAST GUARD PERSONNEL.

(a) FINDINGS.—The Congress finds the following:

(1) On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf of Mexico coastal region of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, causing the worst natural disaster in United States history.

(2) The Coast Guard strategically positioned its aircraft, vessels, and personnel the day before Hurricane Katrina made landfall and launched search and rescue teams within hours after Hurricane Katrina struck.

(3) The Coast Guard moved its operations in areas threatened by Hurricane Katrina to higher ground and mobilized cutters, small boats, and aircraft from all around the United States to help in the response to Hurricane Katrina.

(4) The response to Hurricane Katrina by members and employees of the Coast Guard has been immediate, invaluable, and courageous.

(5) The Coast Guard rescued more than 33,000 people affected by Hurricane Katrina through the air and by water, including evacuations of hospitals, and has been at the center of efforts to restore commerce to areas affected by Hurricane Katrina by clearing shipping channels, replacing aids to navigation, and securing uprooted oil rigs.

(6) The Coast Guard was at the forefront of the Federal response to the numerous oil and chemical spills in the area affected by Hurricane Katrina.

(7) Members and employees of the Coast Guard—

(A) have shown great leadership in helping to coordinate relief efforts with respect to Hurricane Katrina;

(B) have used their expertise and specialized skills to provide immediate assistance to victims and survivors of the hurricane; and

(C) have set up remote assistance operations in the affected areas in order to best provide service to the Gulf of Mexico coastal region.

(8) Members and employees of the Coast Guard have worked together to bring clean water, food, and resources to victims and survivors in need.

(b) COMMENDATION, RECOGNITION, AND THANKS.—The Congress—

(1) commends the outstanding efforts in response to Hurricane Katrina by members and employees of the Coast Guard;

(2) recognizes that the actions of these individuals went above and beyond the call of duty; and

(3) thanks them for their continued dedication and service.

(c) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the Coast Guard should play a major role in response to any future national emergency or disaster caused by a natural event in the United States in a coastal or offshore area.

#### SEC. 3. TEMPORARY AUTHORIZATION TO EXTEND THE DURATION OF LICENSES, CERTIFICATES OF REGISTRY, AND MERCHANT MARINERS' DOCUMENTS.

(a) LICENSES AND CERTIFICATES OF REGISTRY.—Notwithstanding section 7106 and 7107 of title 46, United States Code, the Secretary of the department in which the Coast Guard is operating may temporarily extend the duration of a license or certificate of registry issued for an individual under chapter 71 of that title until not later than February 28, 2006, if—

(1) the individual is a resident of Alabama, Mississippi, or Louisiana; or

(2) the individual is a resident of any other State, and the records of the individual—

(A) are located at the Coast Guard facility in New Orleans that was damaged by Hurricane Katrina; or

(B) were damaged or lost as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

(b) MERCHANT MARINERS' DOCUMENTS.—Notwithstanding section 7302(g) of title 46, United States Code, the Secretary of the Department in which the Coast Guard is operating may temporarily extend the duration of a merchant mariners' document issued for an individual under chapter 73 of that title until not later than February 28, 2006, if—

(1) the individual is a resident of Alabama, Mississippi, or Louisiana; or

(2) the individual is a resident of any other State, and the records of the individual—

(A) are located at the Coast Guard facility in New Orleans that was damaged by Hurricane Katrina; or

(B) were damaged or lost as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

(c) MANNER OF EXTENSION.—Any extensions granted under this section may be granted to individual seamen or a specifically identified group of seamen.

#### SEC. 4. TEMPORARY AUTHORIZATION TO EXTEND THE DURATION OF VESSEL CERTIFICATES OF INSPECTION.

(a) AUTHORITY TO EXTEND.—Notwithstanding section 3307 and 3711(b) of title 46, United States Code, the Secretary of the department in which the Coast Guard is operating may temporarily extend the duration or the validity of a certificate of inspection or a certificate of compliance issued under chapter 33 or 37, respectively, of title 46, United States Code, for up to 3 months for a vessel inspected by a Coast Guard Marine Safety Office located in Alabama, Mississippi, or Louisiana.

(b) EXPIRATION OF AUTHORITY.—The authority provided under this section expires February 28, 2006.

#### SEC. 5. PRESERVATION OF LEAVE LOST DUE TO HURRICANE KATRINA OPERATIONS.

(a) PRESERVATION OF LEAVE.—Notwithstanding section 701(b) of title 10, United States Code, any member of the Coast Guard who serves on active duty for a continuous period of 30 days, who is assigned to duty or otherwise detailed in support of units or operations in the Eighth Coast Guard District area of responsibility for activities to mitigate the consequences of, or assist in the recovery from, Hurricane Katrina, during the period beginning on August 28, 2005, and ending on January 1, 2006, and who would otherwise lose any accumulated leave in excess of 60 days as a consequence of such assignment, is authorized to retain an accumulated total of up to 90 days of leave.

(b) EXCESS LEAVE.—Leave in excess of 60 days accumulated under subsection (a) shall be lost unless used by the member before the commencement of the second fiscal year following the fiscal year in which the assignment commences, or in the case of a Reserve members, the year in which the period of active service is completed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky). Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. LOBIONDO) and the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey.

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

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this important bill to address the concerns of Coast Guardsmen and the merchant mariner community that

were affected by the recent hurricanes along the gulf coast. Most of the provisions that are being offered in this bill are nearly identical to the language that was included in H.R. 889, the Coast Guard Maritime Transportation Act of 2005, that is currently in conference with the Senate. The conferees have made a great deal of progress towards reconciling the language in both bills. However, some issues remain unresolved. As a result, we are moving these temporary extensions today.

This bill authorizes the Coast Guard to temporarily extend the validity of Merchant Mariner Document licenses and vessel certificates of inspection for mariners and vessel owners in the region that was affected by Hurricane Katrina. This extension will allow merchant mariners to continue working in the gulf region and will also allow the Coast Guard to continue its efforts to recover documents that were held at the Regional Examination Center in New Orleans.

This bill also includes a provision to preserve up to 90 days of accumulated leave that would have been lost at the end of this year for Coast Guardsmen who were assigned to operations in response to Hurricane Katrina.

Lastly, the bill commends the men and women of the Coast Guard for their heroic and extraordinary service in response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita this year.

We all watched with admiration at the skill of the Coast Guard helicopter and boat crews who rescued over 33,000 Americans. And while there were a lot of questions and still remain a lot of questions about the Federal response and that whole situation surrounding the gulf coast storms, the Coast Guard is a shining bright light of what dedication and extraordinary service to their country these young men and women have provided in response to a national disaster and emergency, the likes of which we have hardly ever seen before. We thank them for their selfless service and celebrate their bravery and outstanding efforts.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the Coast Guard and the maritime community by supporting this important bill.

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

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I thank Mr. LOBIONDO for moving this legislation so rapidly given the emergency circumstances.

As the chairman said, during the days and weeks after the onslaught of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Coast Guard showed what a Federal agency can do when it is prepared.

The Coast Guard, whose motto is *Semper Paratus*, always ready, was prepared to respond to this storm. Before levees ever broke, the Coast Guard was flying additional helicopters and extra air crews into the gulf region. Once the storm hit, their air crews and boat crews were operating 24 hours a day to save their countrymen.

The chairman and I visited the Coast Guard after the bulk of the work was done in the New Orleans area to get a briefing and to congratulate them on behalf of all the Members of the Congress for their work. And we saw their work. We saw that being prepared to respond to a disaster is not just a paper exercise to sit on the shelf when the big one occurs. Being prepared is something they do every day. They develop relationships with State and local government officials. They know who in the private sector can help provide resources to respond. They make decisions quickly so that they can implement an effective response. And as the chairman said, they saved over 33,000 lives during their response to the hurricanes.

So this bill addresses a number of Coast Guard related issues that need to be addressed very quickly. They were in H.R. 889, the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2005, when we passed the bill in the House in September. However, the conferees on this bill have been unable so far to come to a resolution on all the issues, and there are a few time-sensitive provisions that cannot wait. For example, section 3 of this bill allows the Coast Guard to temporarily extend the license and Merchant Mariner Documents for individuals whose personnel records were damaged or destroyed in the 8 feet of water that flooded the Coast Guard Record Center in New Orleans. It also allows the Coast Guard to extend the license and documents of individuals who are residents of Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi since their own personal records may have been destroyed in their home or office.

Current law states that a license or Merchant Mariner Document is only valid for 5 years. Some of those documents are expiring, and the Coast Guard feels they cannot extend them without the paperwork that is in their flooded building or in the mariner's home. So this bill allows these licenses and documents to be extended to the end of February 2006.

The gentleman from Florida (Mr. BOYD) has raised this issue with me over the past week when it became apparent that the conferees were not going to complete the work on H.R. 889. And I want to thank the chairman and his staff for allowing us to work this out so quickly and to be able to assure the gentleman that his concerns have been addressed in this bill. Any mariner who is a resident of Florida may have his or her license or Merchant Mariner Document renewed if their records were in the Coast Guard's Records Office in New Orleans that was flooded.

Similarly, section 4 allows the Coast Guard to temporarily extend the certificate of inspection or certificate of compliance if the vessel is normally inspected by a Coast Guard Marine Safety Office located in Alabama, Mississippi or Louisiana.

Several hundred men and women in the Coast Guard spent so much time

responding to Hurricane Katrina that they themselves were not able to use their accumulated leave before the end of the fiscal year. So this bill in section 5 allows Coast Guard personnel who were involved in this hurricane response to carry over for 90 days instead of the normal 60 days that they were allowed.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, H.R. 4508 expresses a sense of Congress that the men and women serving in the Coast Guard went above and beyond the call of duty when they responded to Hurricane Katrina and thanks them for their continued dedication and service to our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, again, I want to thank Chairman LOBIONDO and his staff for working so closely with our staff to get this out quickly. I urge my colleagues to voice their support for H.R. 4508.

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

Mr. LOBIONDO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. SOUDER).

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank and praise Chairman LoBiondo for his steadfast, consistent, constant advocacy of the Coast Guard because that has been very important here in Congress and very important to the Coast Guard.

I rise to commend the Coast Guard's outstanding response to Hurricane Katrina and support the Coast Guard Hurricane Relief Act of 2005. Recently, more than ever, the Coast Guard has demonstrated its unique multi-mission role as the world's premiere maritime service.

The devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina along our gulf coast had been well documented. One of the best stories to emerge from this disaster has been the heroic work of our Coast Guard. Hurricane Katrina ravaged Coast Guard stations in Gulfport and Pascagoula, Mississippi, and looters wrecked part of its New Orleans base.

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But that did not stop the Coast Guard from sending out rescue helicopters, cutters, and small boats on dangerous and exhausting missions to save lives and clear waterways after the hurricane ravaged the gulf coast.

By August 30, the Coast Guard had rescued some 1,200 people even though continued gale force winds made air and sea operations extremely hazardous.

In the first 5 days after Katrina hit, the Coast Guard surged 30 cutters, 38 helicopters and over 5,000 personnel into the affected areas. In addition to search-and-rescue operations, these assets also provided vital security, logistics, and communications support to the areas hardest hit by the storm. At the height of Katrina rescue operations, over 33 percent of the Coast Guard aircraft were deployed to the affected region.

As a military, multimission maritime service, the Coast Guard performs

a unique blend of humanitarian, law enforcement, regulatory, and military missions. The service plays a critical role in providing maritime security, maritime safety, protection of natural resources, and national defense services.

As chairman of the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources and a member of the Committee on Homeland Security, I am very aware of the critical role performed by the Coast Guard in drug interdiction and homeland security.

In this past week alone, the Coast Guard, in partnership with the Federal law enforcement agencies in the Department of Homeland Security and Justice, and the Department of Defense, seized over 10 tons of cocaine bound for our shores. In fiscal year 2005, the Coast Guard seized over 300,000 pounds of cocaine, worth approximately \$9.7 billion. This was another record year of drug seizures, and the Coast Guard plays a critical role in interdicting these enormous loads before they reach our cities.

As Hurricane Katrina has made abundantly clear, our country needs a strong and robust Coast Guard, and Congress needs to ensure that we are putting the right tools and equipment into the very capable hands of Coast Guard men and women so that they may continue to deliver the robust maritime safety and security America expects and deserves.

The Coast Guard's Deepwater recapitalization project plays an absolutely critical role in building a more ready and capable 21st-century Coast Guard equal to the challenges we face today and anticipate tomorrow.

It is vitally important to our national drug control strategy and our national security, as well as protecting our Nation's citizens from natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina, that the Deepwater project be accelerated and that there be more Coast Guard ships and aircraft to respond to the many critical missions of the Coast Guard.

The Coast Guard's motto, "Semper Paratus," Always Ready, has been earned through the courage and actions of each member of the Coast Guard. I am very eager to support the Coast Guard Hurricane Relief Act of 2005 and urge this vital legislation be hopefully unanimously adopted.

Mr. LOBIONDO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BOYD).

Mr. BOYD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. LOBIONDO) for their work and for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, as has been said here earlier, the Coast Guard facility in New Orleans was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina that handles vessel licensing for those of us on the gulf coast, and with that, many of the records that handle the relicensing for those vessels.

I want to thank Chairman YOUNG and Ranking Member OBERSTAR and these gentlemen for having the foresight to try to fix this problem. They were working on it in the Coast Guard reauthorization bill, obviously; and this piece of legislation will do that.

I also want to particularly thank them for resolving the issue as it relates to Florida boat owners; and so, Mr. Speaker, I just came to say to them, thanks.

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

I will close briefly and thank the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) for joining me, and the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) for their strong support. I thank the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BOYD).

This is a great example of how we can recognize a problem, put our shoulders to the same wheel, and move forward with an issue.

I will just use the opportunity, in addition to urging my colleagues to support this legislation, to remind them that over the year we have continued to give the Coast Guard many more missions, but not any more resources. Katrina and Rita were a great example of the dedication and the training and the patriotism of our men and women in the Coast Guard, and it should be a great example for all of us as to why we must continue to focus on getting these men and women the key resources they need for additional personnel, for men and for assets.

There is not a mission that we could give the Coast Guard that they could not do unless we deny them the ability through the resources to be able to do that.

We have made some great strides this year. The Coast Guard continues to do an outstanding job in relation to their domestic priorities, but especially for their number one mission now, which is homeland security and maritime antiterrorism.

So, Mr. Speaker, once again, I thank my colleagues and urge everyone to support this legislation.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer my full support for H.R. 4508, commending the Coast Guard for its outstanding response to Hurricane Katrina.

On August, 2005 we saw one of the worst natural disasters in our nation's history ravage the gulf coast along Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi. While many of our government agencies were unprepared to deal with such a disaster, the Coast Guard responded immediately and courageously.

The Coast Guard was responsible for saving over 33,000 lives—six times the number of lives the Coast Guard saved in 2004—after Katrina hit, coordinating pollution response with the Environmental Protection Agency, the state of Louisiana and local industries, and managing the mega-shelters in my hometown of Houston, Texas, where tens of thousands of the evacuees found relief following the storm. They have also been at the center of efforts to restore commerce to areas affected by Katrina by clearing shipping channels, re-

placing aids to navigation, and securing uprooted oil rigs.

Coast Guard Lieutenant Joe Leonard and the units in Houston did a remarkable job in managing these shelters that received thousands of people in the days and weeks following Katrina. Many of these people were left with nothing, but these shelters provided them food, water, and a place to stay until FEMA and other government agencies could find more suitable housing.

Mr. Speaker, I would again like to commend the Coast Guard for their remarkable job responding to Hurricane Katrina, and would urge all my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 4508.

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this bill.

As this body's only licensed mariner, I understand the lengths to which our Nation's mariners and vessel owners go, to obtain or renew their required licenses and documents.

This bill will allow merchant mariners and vessel owners in the gulf region to continue normal operations under existing merchant mariner documents, licenses and certificates of vessel inspection.

The bill will also allow the Coast Guard to continue its recovery of documents that were damaged by flood waters at the Regional Examination Center in New Orleans necessary to issue renewed licenses and documents in the future.

The Coast Guard has done a remarkable job to restore most services in the gulf region despite suffering significant damage to Coast Guard facilities.

However, as a result of coastguardsmen's tireless effort to protect the safety and security of our coasts many servicemen were called to duty when otherwise they would have been on leave.

This bill assures that any member of the Coast Guard that was involved in the response efforts along the gulf coast will retain accumulated leave up to 90 days that would otherwise be lost.

Lastly, this bill commends the men and women of the Coast Guard for their heroic and selfless service in response to hurricanes Katrina and Rita this year.

I urge all members to join me in supporting the Coast Guard and the Merchant Mariner community for their continued efforts to restore normal and safe operations along our gulf coast.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. LOBIONDO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4508.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LOBIONDO. Mr. 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. 4508.