

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. 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 motion will be postponed.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2007

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill H.R. 3246 to amend title 40, United States Code, to provide a comprehensive regional approach to economic and infrastructure development in the most severely economically distressed regions in the Nation, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3246

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 "Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSES.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(1) certain regions of the Nation, including Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta Region, the Northern Great Plains Region, the Southeast Crescent Region, the Southwest Border Region, the Northern Border Region, and rural Alaska, have suffered from chronic distress far above the national average;

(2) an economically distressed region can suffer unemployment and poverty at a rate that is 150 percent of the national average; and

(3) regional commissions are unique Federal-State partnerships that can provide targeted resources to alleviate pervasive economic distress.

(b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are—

(1) to provide a comprehensive regional approach to economic and infrastructure development in the most severely economically distressed regions in the Nation; and

(2) to ensure that the most severely economically distressed regions in the Nation have the necessary tools to develop the basic building blocks for economic development, such as transportation and basic public infrastructure, job skills training, and business development.

SEC. 3. REGIONAL ECONOMIC AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Title 40, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating subtitle V as subtitle VI; and

(2) by inserting after subtitle IV the following:

"Subtitle V—Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development

Table with 2 columns: Section Number and Section Title. Includes Chapter 151, Sections 15101 through 15107.

"CHAPTER 151—GENERAL PROVISIONS

"Sec.

"15101. Definitions.

"§ 15101. Definitions

"In this subtitle, the following definitions apply:

"(1) COMMISSION.—The term 'Commission' means a Commission established under section 15301.

"(2) LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT.—The term 'local development district' means an entity that—

"(A)(i) is an economic development district that is—

"(I) in existence on the date of enactment of this chapter; and

"(II) located in the region; or

"(ii) if an entity described in clause (i) does not exist—

"(I) is organized and operated in a manner that ensures broad-based community participation and an effective opportunity for local officials, community leaders, and the public to contribute to the development and implementation of programs in the region;

"(II) is governed by a policy board with at least a simple majority of members consisting of—

"(aa) elected officials; or

"(bb) designees or employees of a general purpose unit of local government that have been appointed to represent the unit of local government; and

"(III) is certified by the Governor or appropriate State officer as having a charter or authority that includes the economic development of counties, portions of counties, or other political subdivisions within the region; and

"(B) has not, as certified by the Federal Cochairperson—

"(i) inappropriately used Federal grant funds from any Federal source; or

"(ii) appointed an officer who, during the period in which another entity inappropriately used Federal grant funds from any Federal source, was an officer of the other entity.

"(3) FEDERAL GRANT PROGRAM.—The term 'Federal grant program' means a Federal grant program to provide assistance in carrying out economic and community development activities.

"(4) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term 'Indian tribe' has the meaning given the term in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 450b).

"(5) NONPROFIT ENTITY.—The term 'nonprofit entity' means any entity with tax-exempt or nonprofit status, as defined by the Internal Revenue Service, that has been formed for the purpose of economic development.

"(6) REGION.—The term 'region' means the area covered by a Commission as described in subchapter II of chapter 157.

"CHAPTER 153—REGIONAL COMMISSIONS

"Sec.

"15301. Establishment, membership, and employees.

"15302. Decisions.

"15303. Functions.

"15304. Administrative powers and expenses.

"15305. Meetings.

"15306. Personal financial interests.

"15307. Tribal representation on Northern Great Plains Regional Commission.

"15308. Tribal participation.

"15309. Annual report.

"§ 15301. Establishment, membership, and employees

"(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There are established the following regional Commissions:

"(1) The Delta Regional Commission.

"(2) The Northern Great Plains Regional Commission.

"(3) The Southeast Crescent Regional Commission.

"(4) The Southwest Border Regional Commission.

"(5) The Northern Border Regional Commission.

"(b) MEMBERSHIP.—

"(1) FEDERAL AND STATE MEMBERS.—Each Commission shall be composed of the following members:

"(A) A Federal Cochairperson, to be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate.

"(B) The Governor of each participating State in the region of the Commission.

"(2) ALTERNATE MEMBERS.—

"(A) ALTERNATE FEDERAL COCHAIRPERSON.—

The President shall appoint an alternate Federal Cochairperson for each Commission. The alternate Federal Cochairperson, when not actively serving as an alternate for the Federal Cochairperson, shall perform such functions and duties as are delegated by the Federal Cochairperson.

"(B) STATE ALTERNATES.—The State member of a participating State may have a single alternate, who shall be appointed by the Governor of the State from among the members of the Governor's cabinet or personal staff.

"(C) VOTING.—An alternate member shall vote in the case of the absence, death, disability, removal, or resignation of the Federal or State member for which the alternate member is an alternate.

"(3) COCHAIRPERSONS.—A Commission shall be headed by—

"(A) the Federal Cochairperson, who shall serve as a liaison between the Federal Government and the Commission; and

"(B) a State Cochairperson, who shall be a Governor of a participating State in the region and shall be elected by the State members for a term of not less than 1 year.

"(4) CONSECUTIVE TERMS.—A State member may not be elected to serve as State Cochairperson for more than 2 consecutive terms.

"(c) COMPENSATION.—

"(1) FEDERAL COCHAIRPERSONS.—Each Federal Cochairperson shall be compensated by the Federal Government at level III of the Executive Schedule as set out in section 5314 of title 5.

"(2) ALTERNATE FEDERAL COCHAIRPERSONS.—Each Federal Cochairperson's alternate shall be compensated by the Federal Government at level V of the Executive Schedule as set out in section 5316 of title 5.

"(3) STATE MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES.—Each State member and alternate shall be compensated by the State that they represent at the rate established by the laws of that State.

"(d) EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND STAFF.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—A Commission shall appoint and fix the compensation of an executive director and such other personnel as are necessary to enable the Commission to carry out its duties. Compensation under this paragraph may not exceed the maximum rate of basic pay established for the Senior Executive Service under section 5382 of title 5, including any applicable locality-based comparability payment that may be authorized under section 5304(h)(2)(C) of that title.

"(2) EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.—The executive director shall be responsible for carrying out the administrative duties of the Commission, directing the Commission staff, and such other duties as the Commission may assign.

"(e) NO FEDERAL EMPLOYEE STATUS.—No member, alternate, officer, or employee of a Commission (other than the Federal Cochairperson, the alternate Federal Cochairperson, staff of the Federal Cochairperson, and any Federal employee detailed to the Commission) shall be considered to be a Federal employee for any purpose.

“§ 15302. Decisions

“(a) REQUIREMENTS FOR APPROVAL.—Except as provided in section 15304(c)(3), decisions by the Commission shall require the affirmative vote of the Federal Cochairperson and a majority of the State members (exclusive of members representing States delinquent under section 15304(c)(3)(C)).

“(b) CONSULTATION.—In matters coming before the Commission, the Federal Cochairperson shall, to the extent practicable, consult with the Federal departments and agencies having an interest in the subject matter.

“(c) QUORUMS.—A Commission shall determine what constitutes a quorum for Commission meetings; except that—

“(1) any quorum shall include the Federal Cochairperson or the alternate Federal Cochairperson; and

“(2) a State alternate member shall not be counted toward the establishment of a quorum.

“(d) PROJECTS AND GRANT PROPOSALS.—The approval of project and grant proposals shall be a responsibility of each Commission and shall be carried out in accordance with section 15503.

“§ 15303. Functions

“A Commission shall—

“(1) assess the needs and assets of its region based on available research, demonstration projects, investigations, assessments, and evaluations of the region prepared by Federal, State, and local agencies, universities, local development districts, and other nonprofit groups;

“(2) develop, on a continuing basis, comprehensive and coordinated economic and infrastructure development strategies to establish priorities and approve grants for the economic development of its region, giving due consideration to other Federal, State, and local planning and development activities in the region;

“(3) not later than one year after the date of enactment of this section, and after taking into account State plans developed under section 15502, establish priorities in an economic and infrastructure development plan for its region, including 5-year regional outcome targets;

“(4)(A) enhance the capacity of, and provide support for, local development districts in its region; or

“(B) if no local development district exists in an area in a participating State in the region, foster the creation of a local development district;

“(5) encourage private investment in industrial, commercial, and other economic development projects in its region;

“(6) cooperate with and assist State governments with the preparation of economic and infrastructure development plans and programs for participating States;

“(7) formulate and recommend to the Governors and legislatures of States that participate in the Commission forms of interstate cooperation and, where appropriate, international cooperation; and

“(8) work with State and local agencies in developing appropriate model legislation to enhance local and regional economic development.

“§ 15304. Administrative powers and expenses

“(a) POWERS.—In carrying out its duties under this subtitle, a Commission may—

“(1) hold such hearings, sit and act at such times and places, take such testimony, receive such evidence, and print or otherwise reproduce and distribute a description of the proceedings and reports on actions by the Commission as the Commission considers appropriate;

“(2) authorize, through the Federal or State Cochairperson or any other member of

the Commission designated by the Commission, the administration of oaths if the Commission determines that testimony should be taken or evidence received under oath;

“(3) request from any Federal, State, or local agency such information as may be available to or procurable by the agency that may be of use to the Commission in carrying out the duties of the Commission;

“(4) adopt, amend, and repeal bylaws and rules governing the conduct of business and the performance of duties by the Commission;

“(5) request the head of any Federal agency, State agency, or local government to detail to the Commission such personnel as the Commission requires to carry out its duties, each such detail to be without loss of seniority, pay, or other employee status;

“(6) provide for coverage of Commission employees in a suitable retirement and employee benefit system by making arrangements or entering into contracts with any participating State government or otherwise providing retirement and other employee coverage;

“(7) accept, use, and dispose of gifts or donations or services or real, personal, tangible, or intangible property;

“(8) enter into and perform such contracts, cooperative agreements, or other transactions as are necessary to carry out Commission duties, including any contracts or cooperative agreements with a department, agency, or instrumentality of the United States, a State (including a political subdivision, agency, or instrumentality of the State), or a person, firm, association, or corporation; and

“(9) maintain a government relations office in the District of Columbia and establish and maintain a central office at such location in its region as the Commission may select.

“(b) FEDERAL AGENCY COOPERATION.—A Federal agency shall—

“(1) cooperate with a Commission; and

“(2) provide, to the extent practicable, on request of the Federal Cochairperson, appropriate assistance in carrying out this subtitle, in accordance with applicable Federal laws (including regulations).

“(c) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2), the administrative expenses of a Commission shall be paid—

“(A) by the Federal Government, in an amount equal to 50 percent of the administrative expenses of the Commission; and

“(B) by the States participating in the Commission, in an amount equal to 50 percent of the administrative expenses.

“(2) EXPENSES OF THE FEDERAL COCHAIRPERSON.—All expenses of the Federal Cochairperson, including expenses of the alternate and staff of the Federal Cochairperson, shall be paid by the Federal Government.

“(3) STATE SHARE.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subparagraph (B), the share of administrative expenses of a Commission to be paid by each State of the Commission shall be determined by a unanimous vote of the State members of the Commission.

“(B) NO FEDERAL PARTICIPATION.—The Federal Cochairperson shall not participate or vote in any decision under subparagraph (A).

“(C) DELINQUENT STATES.—During any period in which a State is more than 1 year delinquent in payment of the State's share of administrative expenses of the Commission under this subsection—

“(i) no assistance under this subtitle shall be provided to the State (including assistance to a political subdivision or a resident of the State) for any project not approved as of the date of the commencement of the delinquency; and

“(ii) no member of the Commission from the State shall participate or vote in any action by the Commission.

“(4) EFFECT ON ASSISTANCE.—A State's share of administrative expenses of a Commission under this subsection shall not be taken into consideration when determining the amount of assistance provided to the State under this subtitle.

“§ 15305. Meetings

“(a) INITIAL MEETING.—Each Commission shall hold an initial meeting not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this section.

“(b) ANNUAL MEETING.—Each Commission shall conduct at least 1 meeting each year with the Federal Cochairperson and at least a majority of the State members present.

“(c) ADDITIONAL MEETINGS.—Each Commission shall conduct additional meetings at such times as it determines and may conduct such meetings by electronic means.

“§ 15306. Personal financial interests

“(a) CONFLICTS OF INTEREST.—

“(1) NO ROLE ALLOWED.—Except as permitted by paragraph (2), an individual who is a State member or alternate, or an officer or employee of a Commission, shall not participate personally and substantially as a member, alternate, officer, or employee of the Commission, through decision, approval, disapproval, recommendation, request for a ruling, or other determination, contract, claim, controversy, or other matter in which, to the individual's knowledge, any of the following has a financial interest:

“(A) The individual.

“(B) The individual's spouse, minor child, or partner.

“(C) An organization (except a State or political subdivision of a State) in which the individual is serving as an officer, director, trustee, partner, or employee.

“(D) Any person or organization with whom the individual is negotiating or has any arrangement concerning prospective employment.

“(2) EXCEPTION.—Paragraph (1) shall not apply if the individual, in advance of the proceeding, application, request for a ruling or other determination, contract, claim controversy, or other particular matter presenting a potential conflict of interest—

“(A) advises the Commission of the nature and circumstances of the matter presenting the conflict of interest;

“(B) makes full disclosure of the financial interest; and

“(C) receives a written decision of the Commission that the interest is not so substantial as to be considered likely to affect the integrity of the services that the Commission may expect from the individual.

“(3) VIOLATION.—An individual violating this subsection shall be fined under title 18, imprisoned for not more than 1 year, or both.

“(b) STATE MEMBER OR ALTERNATE.—A State member or alternate member may not receive any salary, or any contribution to, or supplementation of, salary, for services on a Commission from a source other than the State of the member or alternate.

“(c) DETAILED EMPLOYEES.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—No person detailed to serve a Commission shall receive any salary, or any contribution to, or supplementation of, salary, for services provided to the Commission from any source other than the State, local, or intergovernmental department or agency from which the person was detailed to the Commission.

“(2) VIOLATION.—Any person that violates this subsection shall be fined under title 18, imprisoned not more than 1 year, or both.

“(d) FEDERAL COCHAIRMAN, ALTERNATE TO FEDERAL COCHAIRMAN, AND FEDERAL OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES.—The Federal Cochairman, the alternate to the Federal Cochairman, and any Federal officer or employee detailed to duty with the Commission are not subject to this section but remain subject to sections 202 through 209 of title 18.

“(e) RESCISSION.—A Commission may declare void any contract, loan, or grant of or by the Commission in relation to which the Commission determines that there has been a violation of any provision under subsection (a)(1), (b), or (c), or any of the provisions of sections 202 through 209 of title 18.

“§ 15307. Tribal representation on Northern Great Plains Regional Commission

“(a) TRIBAL COCHAIRPERSON.—

“(1) APPOINTMENT.—In addition to the members specified in section 15301(b)(1), the membership of the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission shall include a Tribal Cochairperson, to be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Tribal Cochairperson shall be a member of an Indian tribe in the Commission’s region.

“(2) DUTIES.—In addition to the Federal Cochairperson and State Cochairperson, the Commission shall be headed by the Tribal Cochairperson, who shall serve as a liaison between the governments of Indian tribes in the region and the Commission.

“(b) ALTERNATE TRIBAL COCHAIRPERSON.—

“(1) APPOINTMENT.—The President shall appoint an alternate to the Tribal Cochairperson.

“(2) DUTIES.—The alternate Tribal Cochairperson, when not actively serving as an alternate for the Tribal Cochairperson, shall perform such functions and duties as are delegated by the Tribal Cochairperson.

“(3) VOTING.—The alternate Tribal Cochairperson shall vote in the case of the absence, death, disability, removal, or resignation of the Tribal Cochairperson.

“(c) COMPENSATION.—

“(1) TRIBAL COCHAIRPERSON.—The Tribal Cochairperson shall be compensated by the Federal Government at level III of the Executive Schedule as set out in section 5314 of title 5.

“(2) ALTERNATE TRIBAL COCHAIRPERSON.—The Tribal Cochairperson’s alternate shall be compensated by the Federal Government at level V of the Executive Schedule as set out in section 5316 of title 5.

“(d) EXPENSES OF TRIBAL COCHAIRPERSON.—All expenses of the Tribal Cochairperson, including expenses of the alternate and staff of the Tribal Cochairperson, shall be paid by the Federal Government.

“(e) DUTIES AND PRIVILEGES.—Except as provided in subsections (c) and (d), the Tribal Cochairperson shall have the same duties and privileges as the State Cochairperson.

“§ 15308. Tribal participation

“Governments of Indian tribes in the region of the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission or the Southwest Border Regional Commission shall be allowed to participate in matters before that Commission in the same manner and to the same extent as State agencies and instrumentalities in the region.

“§ 15309. Annual report

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the last day of each fiscal year, each Commission shall submit to the President and Congress a report on the activities carried out by the Commission under this subtitle in the fiscal year.

“(b) CONTENTS.—The report shall include—

“(1) a description of the criteria used by the Commission to designate counties under section 15702 and a list of the counties designated in each category;

“(2) an evaluation of the progress of the Commission in meeting the goals identified in the Commission’s economic and infrastructure development plan under section 15303 and State economic and infrastructure development plans under section 15502; and

“(3) any policy recommendations approved by the Commission.

“CHAPTER 155—FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

“Sec.

“15501. Economic and infrastructure development grants.

“15502. Comprehensive economic and infrastructure development plans.

“15503. Approval of applications for assistance.

“15504. Program development criteria.

“15505. Local development districts and organizations.

“15506. Supplements to Federal grant programs.

“§ 15501. Economic and infrastructure development grants

“(a) IN GENERAL.—A Commission may make grants to States and local governments, Indian tribes, and public and nonprofit organizations for projects, approved in accordance with section 15503—

“(1) to develop the transportation infrastructure of its region;

“(2) to develop the basic public infrastructure of its region;

“(3) to develop the telecommunications infrastructure of its region;

“(4) to assist its region in obtaining job skills training, skills development and employment-related education, entrepreneurship, technology, and business development;

“(5) to provide assistance to severely economically distressed and underdeveloped areas of its region that lack financial resources for improving basic health care and other public services;

“(6) to promote resource conservation, tourism, recreation, and preservation of open space in a manner consistent with economic development goals;

“(7) to promote the development of renewable and alternative energy sources; and

“(8) to otherwise achieve the purposes of this subtitle.

“(b) ALLOCATION OF FUNDS.—A Commission shall allocate at least 40 percent of any grant amounts provided by the Commission in a fiscal year for projects described in paragraphs (1) through (3) of subsection (a).

“(c) SOURCES OF GRANTS.—Grant amounts may be provided entirely from appropriations to carry out this subtitle, in combination with amounts available under other Federal grant programs, or from any other source.

“(d) MAXIMUM COMMISSION CONTRIBUTIONS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraphs (2) and (3), the Commission may contribute not more than 50 percent of a project or activity cost eligible for financial assistance under this section from amounts appropriated to carry out this subtitle.

“(2) DISTRESSED COUNTIES.—The maximum Commission contribution for a project or activity to be carried out in a county for which a distressed county designation is in effect under section 15702 may be increased to 80 percent.

“(3) SPECIAL RULE FOR REGIONAL PROJECTS.—A Commission may increase to 60 percent under paragraph (1) and 90 percent under paragraph (2) the maximum Commission contribution for a project or activity if—

“(A) the project or activity involves 3 or more counties or more than one State; and

“(B) the Commission determines in accordance with section 15302(a) that the project or activity will bring significant interstate or multicounty benefits to a region.

“(e) MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT.—Funds may be provided by a Commission for a program or project in a State under this section only if the Commission determines that the level of Federal or State financial assistance provided under a law other than this subtitle, for the same type of program or project in the same area of the State within region, will not be reduced as a result of funds made available by this subtitle.

“(f) NO RELOCATION ASSISTANCE.—Financial assistance authorized by this section may not be used to assist a person or entity in relocating from one area to another.

“§ 15502. Comprehensive economic and infrastructure development plans

“(a) STATE PLANS.—In accordance with policies established by a Commission, each State member of the Commission shall submit a comprehensive economic and infrastructure development plan for the area of the region represented by the State member.

“(b) CONTENT OF PLAN.—A State economic and infrastructure development plan shall reflect the goals, objectives, and priorities identified in any applicable economic and infrastructure development plan developed by a Commission under section 15303.

“(c) CONSULTATION WITH INTERESTED LOCAL PARTIES.—In carrying out the development planning process (including the selection of programs and projects for assistance), a State shall—

“(1) consult with local development districts, local units of government, and local colleges and universities; and

“(2) take into consideration the goals, objectives, priorities, and recommendations of the entities described in paragraph (1).

“(d) PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—A Commission and applicable State and local development districts shall encourage and assist, to the maximum extent practicable, public participation in the development, revision, and implementation of all plans and programs under this subtitle.

“(2) GUIDELINES.—A Commission shall develop guidelines for providing public participation, including public hearings.

“§ 15503. Approval of applications for assistance

“(a) EVALUATION BY STATE MEMBER.—An application to a Commission for a grant or any other assistance for a project under this subtitle shall be made through, and evaluated for approval by, the State member of the Commission representing the applicant.

“(b) CERTIFICATION.—An application to a Commission for a grant or other assistance for a project under this subtitle shall be eligible for assistance only on certification by the State member of the Commission representing the applicant that the application for the project—

“(1) describes ways in which the project complies with any applicable State economic and infrastructure development plan;

“(2) meets applicable criteria under section 15504;

“(3) adequately ensures that the project will be properly administered, operated, and maintained; and

“(4) otherwise meets the requirements for assistance under this subtitle.

“(c) VOTES FOR DECISIONS.—On certification by a State member of a Commission of an application for a grant or other assistance for a specific project under this section, an affirmative vote of the Commission under section 15302 shall be required for approval of the application.

“§ 15504. Program development criteria

“(a) IN GENERAL.—In considering programs and projects to be provided assistance by a Commission under this subtitle, and in establishing a priority ranking of the requests

for assistance provided to the Commission, the Commission shall follow procedures that ensure, to the maximum extent practicable, consideration of—

“(1) the relationship of the project or class of projects to overall regional development;

“(2) the per capita income and poverty and unemployment and outmigration rates in an area;

“(3) the financial resources available to the applicants for assistance seeking to carry out the project, with emphasis on ensuring that projects are adequately financed to maximize the probability of successful economic development;

“(4) the importance of the project or class of projects in relation to the other projects or classes of projects that may be in competition for the same funds;

“(5) the prospects that the project for which assistance is sought will improve, on a continuing rather than a temporary basis, the opportunities for employment, the average level of income, or the economic development of the area to be served by the project; and

“(6) the extent to which the project design provides for detailed outcome measurements by which grant expenditures and the results of the expenditures may be evaluated.

“§ 15505. Local development districts and organizations

“(a) GRANTS TO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS.—Subject to the requirements of this section, a Commission may make grants to a local development district to assist in the payment of development planning and administrative expenses.

“(b) CONDITIONS FOR GRANTS.—

“(1) MAXIMUM AMOUNT.—The amount of a grant awarded under this section may not exceed 80 percent of the administrative and planning expenses of the local development district receiving the grant.

“(2) MAXIMUM PERIOD FOR STATE AGENCIES.—In the case of a State agency certified as a local development district, a grant may not be awarded to the agency under this section for more than 3 fiscal years.

“(3) LOCAL SHARE.—The contributions of a local development district for administrative expenses may be in cash or in kind, fairly evaluated, including space, equipment, and services.

“(c) DUTIES OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS.—A local development district shall—

“(1) operate as a lead organization serving multicounty areas in the region at the local level;

“(2) assist the Commission in carrying out outreach activities for local governments, community development groups, the business community, and the public;

“(3) serve as a liaison between State and local governments, nonprofit organizations (including community-based groups and educational institutions), the business community, and citizens; and

“(4) assist the individuals and entities described in paragraph (3) in identifying, assessing, and facilitating projects and programs to promote the economic development of the region.

“§ 15506. Supplements to Federal grant programs

“(a) FINDING.—Congress finds that certain States and local communities of the region, including local development districts, may be unable to take maximum advantage of Federal grant programs for which the States and communities are eligible because—

“(1) they lack the economic resources to provide the required matching share; or

“(2) there are insufficient funds available under the applicable Federal law with respect to a project to be carried out in the region.

“(b) FEDERAL GRANT PROGRAM FUNDING.—A Commission, with the approval of the Federal Cochairperson, may use amounts made available to carry out this subtitle—

“(1) for any part of the basic Federal contribution to projects or activities under the Federal grant programs authorized by Federal laws; and

“(2) to increase the Federal contribution to projects and activities under the programs above the fixed maximum part of the cost of the projects or activities otherwise authorized by the applicable law.

“(c) CERTIFICATION REQUIRED.—For a program, project, or activity for which any part of the basic Federal contribution to the project or activity under a Federal grant program is proposed to be made under subsection (b), the Federal contribution shall not be made until the responsible Federal official administering the Federal law authorizing the Federal contribution certifies that the program, project, or activity meets the applicable requirements of the Federal law and could be approved for Federal contribution under that law if amounts were available under the law for the program, project, or activity.

“(d) LIMITATIONS IN OTHER LAWS INAPPLICABLE.—Amounts provided pursuant to this subtitle are available without regard to any limitations on areas eligible for assistance or authorizations for appropriation in any other law.

“(e) FEDERAL SHARE.—The Federal share of the cost of a project or activity receiving assistance under this section shall not exceed 80 percent.

“(f) MAXIMUM COMMISSION CONTRIBUTION.—Section 15501(d), relating to limitations on Commission contributions, shall apply to a program, project, or activity receiving assistance under this section.

“CHAPTER 157—ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

“SUBCHAPTER I—GENERAL PROVISIONS

“Sec.

“15701. Consent of States.

“15702. Distressed counties and areas.

“15703. Counties eligible for assistance in more than one region.

“15704. Inspector General; records.

“15705. Biannual meetings of representatives of all Commissions.

“15706. Relationship to other laws.

“SUBCHAPTER II—DESIGNATION OF REGIONS

“15731. Delta Regional Commission.

“15732. Northern Great Plains Regional Commission.

“15733. Southeast Crescent Regional Commission.

“15734. Southwest Border Regional Commission.

“15735. Northern Border Regional Commission.

“SUBCHAPTER III—AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS

“15751. Authorization of appropriations.

“SUBCHAPTER I—GENERAL PROVISIONS

“§ 15701. Consent of States

“This subtitle does not require a State to engage in or accept a program under this subtitle without its consent.

“§ 15702. Distressed counties and areas

“(a) DESIGNATIONS.—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this section, and annually thereafter, each Commission shall make the following designations:

“(1) DISTRESSED COUNTIES.—The Commission shall designate as distressed counties those counties in its region that are the most severely and persistently economically distressed and underdeveloped and have high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration.

“(2) TRANSITIONAL COUNTIES.—The Commission shall designate as transitional counties those counties in its region that are economically distressed and underdeveloped or have recently suffered high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration.

“(3) ATTAINMENT COUNTIES.—The Commission shall designate as attainment counties, those counties in its region that are not designated as distressed or transitional counties under this subsection.

“(4) ISOLATED AREAS OF DISTRESS.—The Commission shall designate as isolated areas of distress, areas located in counties designated as attainment counties under paragraph (3) that have high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration.

“(b) ALLOCATION.—A Commission shall allocate at least 50 percent of the appropriations made available to the Commission to carry out this subtitle for programs and projects designed to serve the needs of distressed counties and isolated areas of distress in the region.

“(c) ATTAINMENT COUNTIES.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), funds may not be provided under this subtitle for a project located in a county designated as an attainment county under subsection (a).

“(2) EXCEPTIONS.—

“(A) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS.—The funding prohibition under paragraph (1) shall not apply to grants to fund the administrative expenses of local development districts under section 15505.

“(B) MULTICOUNTY AND OTHER PROJECTS.—A Commission may waive the application of the funding prohibition under paragraph (1) with respect to—

“(i) a multicounty project that includes participation by an attainment county; and

“(ii) any other type of project, if a Commission determines that the project could bring significant benefits to areas of the region outside an attainment county.

“(3) ISOLATED AREAS OF DISTRESS.—For a designation of an isolated area of distress to be effective, the designation shall be supported—

“(A) by the most recent Federal data available; or

“(B) if no recent Federal data are available, by the most recent data available through the government of the State in which the isolated area of distress is located.

“§ 15703. Counties eligible for assistance in more than one region

“(a) LIMITATION.—A political subdivision of a State may not receive assistance under this subtitle in a fiscal year from more than one Commission.

“(b) SELECTION OF COMMISSION.—A political subdivision included in the region of more than one Commission shall select the Commission with which it will participate by notifying, in writing, the Federal Cochairperson and the appropriate State member of that Commission.

“(c) CHANGES IN SELECTIONS.—The selection of a Commission by a political subdivision shall apply in the fiscal year in which the selection is made, and shall apply in each subsequent fiscal year unless the political subdivision, at least 90 days before the first day of the fiscal year, notifies the Cochairpersons of another Commission in writing that the political subdivision will participate in that Commission and also transmits a copy of such notification to the Cochairpersons of the Commission in which the political subdivision is currently participating.

“(d) INCLUSION OF APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION.—In this section, the term ‘Commission’ includes the Appalachian Regional Commission established under chapter 143.

§ 15704. Inspector General; records

“(a) APPOINTMENT OF INSPECTOR GENERAL.—There shall be an Inspector General for the Commissions appointed in accordance with section 3(a) of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.). All of the Commissions shall be subject to a single Inspector General.

“(b) RECORDS OF A COMMISSION.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—A Commission shall maintain accurate and complete records of all its transactions and activities.

“(2) AVAILABILITY.—All records of a Commission shall be available for audit and examination by the Inspector General (including authorized representatives of the Inspector General).

“(c) RECORDS OF RECIPIENTS OF COMMISSION ASSISTANCE.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—A recipient of funds from a Commission under this subtitle shall maintain accurate and complete records of transactions and activities financed with the funds and report to the Commission on the transactions and activities.

“(2) AVAILABILITY.—All records required under paragraph (1) shall be available for audit by the Commission and the Inspector General (including authorized representatives of the Commission and the Inspector General).

“(d) ANNUAL AUDIT.—The Inspector General shall audit the activities, transactions, and records of each Commission on an annual basis.

§ 15705. Biannual meetings of representatives of all Commissions

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Representatives of each Commission, the Appalachian Regional Commission, and the Denali Commission shall meet biannually to discuss issues confronting regions suffering from chronic and contiguous distress and successful strategies for promoting regional development.

“(b) CHAIR OF MEETINGS.—The chair of each meeting shall rotate among the Commissions, with the Appalachian Regional Commission to host the first meeting.

§ 15706. Relationship to other laws

“Projects receiving assistance under this subtitle shall be treated in the manner provided in section 602 of the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3212).

“SUBCHAPTER II—DESIGNATION OF REGIONS**§ 15731. Delta Regional Commission**

“The region of the Delta Regional Commission shall consist of the following political subdivisions:

“(1) ALABAMA.—The counties of Barbour, Bullock, Butler, Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Dallas, Escambia, Greene, Hale, Lowndes, Macon, Marengo, Monroe, Perry, Pickens, Russell, Sumter, Washington, and Wilcox in the State of Alabama.

“(2) ARKANSAS.—The counties of Arkansas, Ashley, Baxter, Bradley, Calhoun, Chicot, Clay, Cleveland, Craighead, Crittenden, Cross, Dallas, Desha, Drew, Fulton, Grant, Greene, Independence, Izard, Jackson, Jefferson, Lawrence, Lee, Lincoln, Lonoke, Marion, Mississippi, Monroe, Ouachita, Phillips, Poinsett, Prairie, Pulaski, Randolph, St. Francis, Searcy, Sharp, Stone, Union, Van Buren, White, and Woodruff in the State of Arkansas.

“(3) ILLINOIS.—The counties of Alexander, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jackson, Johnson, Massac, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Randolph, Saline, Union, White, and Williamson in the State of Illinois.

“(4) KENTUCKY.—The counties of Ballard, Caldwell, Calloway, Carlisle, Christian, Crittenden, Fulton, Graves, Henderson, Hickman, Hopkins, Livingston, Lyon, Mar-

shall, McCracken, McLean, Muhlenberg, Todd, Trigg, Union, and Webster in the State of Kentucky.

“(5) LOUISIANA.—The parishes of Acadia, Allen, Ascension, Assumption, Avoyelles, Beauregard, Bienville, Caldwell, Cameron, Catahoula, Claiborne, Concordia, E. Baton Rouge, DeSoto, E. Carroll, E. Feliciana, Evangeline, Franklin, Grant, Iberia, Iberville, Jackson, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lafourche, LaSalle, Lincoln, Livingston, Madison, Morehouse, Natchitoches, Orleans, Ouachita, Plaquemines, Pointe Coupee, Rapides, Red River, Richland, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. Helena, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, Tangipahoa, Tensas, Union, Vermilion, W. Baton Rouge, W. Carroll, W. Feliciana, Washington, Webster, and Winn in the State of Louisiana.

“(6) MISSISSIPPI.—The counties of Adams, Amite, Attala, Benton, Bolivar, Carroll, Claiborne, Coahoma, Copiah, Covington, DeSoto, Franklin, Grenada, Hinds, Holmes, Humphreys, Issaquena, Jasper, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lafayette, Lawrence, Leflore, Lincoln, Madison, Marion, Marshall, Montgomery, Panola, Pike, Quitman, Rankin, Sharkey, Simpson, Smith, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tippah, Tunica, Union, Walthall, Warren, Washington, Wilkinson, Yalobusha, and Yazoo in the State of Mississippi.

“(7) MISSOURI.—The counties Bollinger, Butler, Cape Girardeau, Carter, Crawford, Dent, Douglas, Dunklin, Howell, Iron, Madison, Mississippi, New Madrid, Oregon, Ozark, Pemiscott, Perry, Phelps, Reynolds, Ripley, Ste. Genevieve, St. Francois, Scott, Shannon, Stoddard, Texas, Washington, Wayne, and Wright in the State of Missouri.

“(8) TENNESSEE.—The counties of Benton, Carroll, Chester, Crockett, Decatur, Dyer, Fayette, Gibson, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henderson, Henry, Lake, Lauderdale, McNairy, Madison, Obion, Shelby, Tipton, and Weakley in the State of Tennessee.

§ 15732. Northern Great Plains Regional Commission

“The region of the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission shall consist of the following:

“(1) All counties of the States of Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

“(2) The counties of Andrew, Atchison, Buchanan, Caldwell, Carroll, Chariton, Clay, Clinton, Cooper, Daviess, DeKalb, Gentry, Grundy, Harrison, Holt, Howard, Jackson, Linn, Livingston, Mercer, Nodaway, Platte, Putnam, Schuyler, Sullivan, and Worth in the State of Missouri.

§ 15733. Southeast Crescent Regional Commission

“The region of the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission shall consist of all counties of the States of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida not already served by the Appalachian Regional Commission or the Delta Regional Commission.

§ 15734. Southwest Border Regional Commission

“The region of the Southwest Border Regional Commission shall consist of the following political subdivisions:

“(1) ARIZONA.—The counties of Cochise, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, La Paz, Maricopa, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz, and Yuma in the State of Arizona.

“(2) CALIFORNIA.—The counties of Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Ventura in the State of California.

“(3) NEW MEXICO.—The counties of Catron, Chaves, Dona Ana, Eddy, Grant, Hidalgo,

Lincoln, Luna, Otero, Sierra, and Socorro in the State of New Mexico.

“(4) TEXAS.—The counties of Atascosa, Bandera, Bee, Bexar, Brewster, Brooks, Cameron, Coke, Concho, Crane, Crockett, Culberson, Dimmit, Duval, Ector, Edwards, El Paso, Frio, Gillespie, Glasscock, Hidalgo, Hudspeth, Irion, Jeff Davis, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells, Karnes, Kendall, Kenedy, Kerr, Kimble, Kinney, Kleberg, La Salle, Live Oak, Loving, Mason, Maverick, McMullen, Medina, Menard, Midland, Nueces, Pecos, Presidio, Reagan, Real, Reeves, San Patricio, Shleicher, Sutton, Starr, Sterling, Terrell, Tom Green Upton, Uvalde, Val Verde, Ward, Webb, Willacy, Wilson, Winkler, Zapata, and Zavala in the State of Texas.

§ 15735. Northern Border Regional Commission

“The region of the Northern Border Regional Commission shall include the following counties:

“(1) MAINE.—The counties of Androscoggin, Aroostook, Franklin, Hancock, Kennebec, Knox, Oxford, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Somerset, Waldo, and Washington in the State of Maine.

“(2) NEW HAMPSHIRE.—The counties of Carroll, Coos, Grafton, and Sullivan in the State of New Hampshire.

“(3) NEW YORK.—The counties of Cayuga, Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Oswego, Seneca, and St. Lawrence in the State of New York.

“(4) VERMONT.—The counties of Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille, and Orleans in the State of Vermont.

“SUBCHAPTER III—AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS**§ 15751. Authorization of appropriations**

“(a) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be appropriated to each Commission to carry out this subtitle—

“(1) \$40,000,000 for fiscal year 2008;

“(2) \$45,000,000 for fiscal year 2009;

“(3) \$50,000,000 for fiscal year 2010;

“(4) \$55,000,000 for fiscal year 2011; and

“(5) \$60,000,000 for fiscal year 2012.

“(b) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—Not more than 10 percent of the funds made available to a Commission in a fiscal year under this section may be used for administrative expenses.”

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The table of subtitles for chapter 40, United States Code, is amended by striking the item relating to subtitle V and inserting the following:

“V. REGIONAL ECONOMIC AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT 15101
“VI. MISCELLANEOUS 17101”.

SEC. 4. CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.

(a) REPEALS.—Subtitles F and G of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 2009aa–2009bb–13) are repealed.

(b) INSPECTOR GENERAL ACT.—Section 11 of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1) by striking “or the President of the Export-Import Bank;” and inserting “the President of the Export-Import Bank; or the Federal Cochairpersons of the Commissions established under section 15301 of title 40, United States Code;” and

(2) in paragraph (2) by striking “or the Export-Import Bank,” and inserting “the Export-Import Bank, or the Commissions established under section 15301 of title 40, United States Code.”

SEC. 5. TRANSFERS OF AUTHORITY AND SAVINGS PROVISIONS.

(a) TRANSFERS OF AUTHORITY.—Subject to the requirements of this Act (including the amendments made by this Act)—

(1) all of the functions of the Delta Regional Authority are transferred to the Delta Regional Commission; and

(2) all of the functions of the Northern Great Plains Regional Authority are transferred to the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission.

(b) **LEGAL DOCUMENTS.**—All orders, determinations, rules, regulations, grants, loans, contracts, and agreements—

(1) that have been issued, made, granted, or allowed to become effective by the Delta Regional Authority or the Northern Great Plains Regional Authority in the performance of any function that is transferred by this section, and

(2) that are in effect on the effective date of such transfer (or become effective after such date pursuant to their terms as in effect on such effective date),

shall continue in effect according to their terms until modified, terminated, superseded, set aside, or revoked in accordance with law by an authorized official, a court of competent jurisdiction, or operation of law.

(c) **TRANSFER OF ASSETS AND PERSONNEL.**—

(1) **DELTA REGIONAL COMMISSION.**—There shall be transferred to the Delta Regional Commission such assets, funds, personnel, records, and other property of the Delta Regional Authority relating to the functions of the Authority as the Commission determines appropriate.

(2) **NORTHERN GREAT PLAINS REGIONAL COMMISSION.**—There shall be transferred to the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission such assets, funds, personnel, records, and other property of the Northern Great Plains Regional Authority as the Commission determines appropriate.

SEC. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act, and the amendments made by this Act, shall take effect on the first day of the first fiscal year beginning after the date of enactment of this Act.

The **SPEAKER** pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. **NORTON**) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. **SHUSTER**) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. **NORTON**. 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. 3246.

The **SPEAKER** pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia?

There was no objection.

Ms. **NORTON**. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

H.R. 3246, as amended, in fact does amend title 40, United States Code, to provide a comprehensive regional approach to economic and infrastructure development in the most severely and economically distressed regions of the Nation.

H.R. 3246, the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007, authorizes two existing commissions and three new regional economic development commissions under a common framework of administration and management, and further provides a framework for good decisionmaking and planning. These commissions are

designed to address problems of systemic poverty and underdevelopment in their respective regions.

The five commissions are: the Delta Regional Commission, the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission, the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission, the Southwest Border Regional Commission, and the Northern Border Regional Commission.

The bill models the administrative and management procedures for these five commissions after the highly successful Appalachian Regional Commission. The bill provides for a voting structure, provisions regarding staffing, conflicts of interest, local development districts, and other matters designed to produce a standard administrative framework.

By providing a uniform set of procedures, this bill provides a consistent method for distributing economic development funds throughout the regions most in need of such assistance and ensures a comprehensive regional approach to economic and infrastructure development where it is most needed in our country.

The Northern Border Regional Commission, the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission, and the Southwest Border Regional Commission have been proposed in legislation introduced in this and in previous Congresses and are designed to address problems of systemic poverty and underdevelopment in those regions. In addition, the Delta Regional Commission and the Northern Great Plains Commission would be authorized through this legislation.

H.R. 3246 authorizes funds for each commission to provide vital assistance for the development of our Nation's most chronically poor and distressed regions.

I would like to say a few words about the uniqueness of each of the new commissions being authorized by this bill. The Southwest Border Region includes all counties within 150 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border. This region contains 11 counties in New Mexico, 65 counties in Texas, 10 counties in Arizona, and seven counties in California, for a combined population of approximately 29 million residents.

According to research compiled by the Interagency Task Force on the Economic Development of the Southwest Border, 20 percent of the residents of this region of the Nation live below the poverty level. Unemployment rates are often as high as five times the national unemployment rate, and a lack of adequate access to capital has created economic disparities and made it difficult for businesses to start up in the region.

The Northern Border Region, stretching from Maine to New York, while abundant in natural resources and rich in potential, lags behind much of the Nation in its economic growth, and its people have not shared properly in the Nation's prosperity. The region's historic reliance on a few basic industries and on agriculture has failed to provide

a diverse enough economic base for a vigorous self-sustained growth. In the belt of counties along the northern border from Maine through New York, 12.5 percent of the population lives in poverty; median household incomes is about \$6,500 below the national average; unemployment through layoffs in traditional manufacturing industries is persistent; and the population grew only by 0.6 percent between 1990 and 2000 while the U.S. population rose by 13.2 percent, showing significant out-migration and loss of young people in the northern border region.

The southeastern portion of the United States, encompassing the States of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida, is an area which has seen poverty rates well above the national average, coupled with record unemployment. The region has also experienced natural disasters at a rate two to three times greater than any other region in the United States. The Southeast Crescent Authority authorizes a local-State-Federal partnership to lift citizens in this geographic area out of poverty and create jobs.

With the Federal allocation of funding, SECA seeks to funnel monies to programs which address one or more of the following criteria for the community betterment: infrastructure, education and job training, health care, entrepreneurship, and leadership development. Those communities with the greatest need will be targeted, and grants will be made according to the degree of distress.

This bill has very broad and very bipartisan support, Mr. Speaker; and the committee has held a series of hearings that has documented the needs that these economic development commissions would address.

□ 1430

I strongly support the bill, and urge passage of H.R. 3246.

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

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

First, I want to express the regrets of the subcommittee ranking member, Mr. **GRAVES** from Missouri, who was unable to be here and has asked me to explain the bill.

H.R. 3246, as amended, authorizes two existing economic development commissions, the Delta Regional Commission and the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission. The bill also creates three new economic development commissions, the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission, the Southwest Border Regional Commission, and the Northern Border Regional Commission.

The Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act authorizes these five regional economic development commissions for 5 years, and provides a structure for economic development, decision-making and planning. The bill outlines conditions for financial assistance, authorizes grants to

local development districts. In addition, the bill establishes an Inspector General for the commission.

Additionally, H.R. 3246 provides a framework for administration and management. The framework is modeled after the Appalachian Regional Commission structure, including membership, voting structure and staffing of the commission. Through the use of this common framework, this bill provides a consistency in distribution of economic development funds.

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

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Maine (Mr. MICHAUD).

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007 represents a vision for economic development in our Nation that will help Americans in the most distressed region of our country.

In the northern border region, we have seen a clear, persistent pattern of economic distress. If you look at the 36 counties that lie on the border right next to the border between Maine and New York, you will find poverty above the national level average, median household income that is more than \$6,500 below the national average. You'll see a persistent unemployment through layoffs and traditional manufacturing industry, and most striking of all, a meager gain in only 0.6 percent of the population between 1990 and 2000, compared to a 13 percent growth nationally over the same period.

In short, Mr. Speaker, our mills are closing, our young people are leaving and too many of our workers are looking for work. Clearly, this region has a common set of challenges and a compelling need for investment and new growth.

As a mill worker for over 28 years at Great Northern Paper Company, I understand the particular challenges in the border regions of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York. Like my father and grandfather before me, I left high school and went straight to work in the paper mill in my hometown. After 28 years, and 2 days after I was sworn into Congress, the mill that I worked at went bankrupt, and my hometown was devastated. Unemployment rose to over 33 percent.

The story of my hometown and the mills where I worked has been repeated throughout the State of Maine and our region. That is why we need to support this region economic development bill. We have to support our regional industries and build on new job opportunities, and that is why we need to invest in leadership and focus in our regional economic development that the Northern Border Commission would bring.

The Northern Border Commission would help the region invest in transportation, health care, agriculture, broadband and alternative energy. It can be a partner with businesses to maintain our industries and build new industry clusters. It can help us create jobs for the long term.

We have all the ingredients that we need to face our challenges head on and make our region an economic engine. This new commission would help us make a fundamental change in our future.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank all my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for working in a bipartisan manner on this bill. I'd like to thank the Chair of the full committee, Chairman OBERSTAR, and the Chair of the subcommittee, Ms. NORTON, for their efforts as well, and also the former Chair of the subcommittee, Mr. SHUSTER, for all his hard work on the regional commission bills, as well as Congressman HODES from New Hampshire who has been a true leader in this particular area as well.

This bill represents a new way forward for economic development in our Nation for the places and the people that need it most. Let's pass this bill and give our people the hope and the future that they deserve.

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

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. HODES).

Mr. HODES. Mr. Speaker, I join Congressman MICHAUD in expressing thanks to Chairman OBERSTAR and other members of the Transportation Committee.

I rise today to urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007. This bill includes the Northern Border Regional Development Commission Act, the first bill I introduced as a Member of Congress, a bill with bipartisan support, and for which I extend a special thanks to Congressman MICHAUD, who has shown extraordinary leadership in the northern border region for economic development.

Mr. Speaker, parts of my home State of New Hampshire, and especially the beautiful region known as the North Country, have taken an economic beating and are struggling to recover. A staggering number of jobs have been lost. We have watched as plants closed and our young people disappeared to places that offer more opportunity. New Hampshire's North Country has suffered repeated economic body blows, and for the people who live there, it's getting harder and harder to get by.

I get up to the North Country quite frequently, and have spoken with hard-working folks with the drive to improve their neighborhoods, but whose communities have been ignored by the Federal Government for years.

If you were to pick up the paper today, Mr. Speaker, you would see pictures of the smokestacks of once thriving pulp mills coming down, having been subject to explosives.

Because of the challenges New Hampshire's North Country face, and the sincere desire of the people there to turn things around and to create new jobs

and new investments, there's a compelling case for leveraging Federal investment in the region. In fact, the northern border region, or the ice belt, which includes the northernmost counties of New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine, has higher unemployment, a higher percentage of people living in poverty, and lower household income than the rest of the Nation.

The commission created in this bill would be charged with investing Federal resources for economic development and job creation in the most distressed counties in that northern border region.

By design and purpose, this bill follows the successful regional development models created in the mid 1960s to improve the economic standing of targeted regions in the South. Based on this successful model, the commission would create a unique Federal-State partnership charged with promoting development through regional planning, technical assistance and funding of projects aimed at encouraging economic prosperity.

The bill works like this: Community development districts and other non-profits are encouraged to bring project ideas to the commission from the local level. This bottom-up, grassroots approach insures that actions reflect both local needs and regional economic development goals. It also insures that States have a deciding voice in what investment is made within their borders.

With a proposed budget of \$40 million per year, the Northern Border Regional Development Commission can help meet a range of local needs. Whether the need is agricultural development, land and forestry conservation to maintain productive traditional uses, investment in transportation infrastructure, alternative and renewable energy or health care facilities, this commission will play a key role in investing in the region's economy.

The bill says, if you're willing to work hard and play by the rules, we're here to help you get ahead. The communities in the northern border region deserve effective government working for them. The Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act is an important first step toward providing good-paying jobs, economic opportunity and revitalized communities.

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

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I want to stress the bipartisan nature of this bill. I also want to stress the hearings we've held on this bill. As you might imagine, when people hear the word "economic development," everybody wants in. This has been a very rigorous process. We have bent over backwards, frontwards and sideways to be completely objective and to be open to Members on both sides of the aisles.

It's worth noting that all of the amendments that were added were requested by minority Members, our Republican colleagues. We're pleased to

do so. They were able to show the need in their respective districts.

This bill, it seems to me, in light of the strong support it has had in our subcommittee and our committee, from Members from all parts of the country, and of all backgrounds and parties, in light of that fact, I urge passage of the bill, and I urge all Members to support this bipartisan bill for economic development for the underdeveloped regions of our country.

Mr. McHUGH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3246, Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007. I appreciate the work Chairman OBERSTAR and Representatives GRAVES, HODES, and MICHAUD have done to develop this important legislation and bring it to the House floor.

The Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act is designed to alleviate systemic poverty and underdevelopment in our Nation's most severely economically distressed areas. These include rural Alaska, Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta region, the northern Great Plains region, the southeast crescent region, the southwest border region, and the northern border region, which includes all 11 counties that I have the honor to represent: Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Oswego, and St. Lawrence.

To provide a comprehensive, consistent and broad-based approach to economic and infrastructure development, H.R. 3246 authorizes five regional economic development commissions. These commissions, modeled after the successful Appalachian Regional Commission, would have a uniform set of procedures and a common structure for administration, decision-making, management, and planning.

With funding authorized and provided by Congress, each Commission would make grants to States and local governments, Indian tribes, and public or nonprofit organizations for projects to develop transportation, public, and telecommunications infrastructure. These projects would also further efforts to provide job skills training, improve basic health care and related services, promote resource conservation, and development of both renewable and alternative energy sources.

My constituent counties, like many others within the northern border region, lag behind the rest of the Nation in economic growth and continue to experience higher than average levels of unemployment, poverty, and outmigration. Very simply, my constituents, as well as those who live in the other affected areas, should no longer be left behind. Moreover, I am confident that with the assistance provided through H.R. 3246, the economies of all the impacted counties will improve, thus resulting in an enhanced quality of life for all.

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3246, the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007, which will help spur economic development in my district of El Paso, TX. I would like to thank Chairman OBERSTAR for his vision regarding the need and importance of regional authorities for development in areas of the country with huge economic need. For the past three Congresses, I have introduced my bill, the Southwest Regional Border Authority Act, in an attempt to bring some relief to the United States-Mexico border and my district of El Paso, TX. This year, under the leadership

of Chairman OBERSTAR, my bill has been included into his overall legislation. I would also like to thank many of my colleagues who represent districts along the United States-Mexico border for their support in the creation of the Southwest Regional Border Authority.

The Chairman's bill would authorize \$1.25 billion over the period of FY 2008 through FY 2012 for five regional commissions one of which will be created in the United States-Mexico border region. The Authorities would be Federal-State partnerships for providing assistance to economically distressed and underdeveloped areas that have experienced high levels of unemployment, poverty, or outmigration. Three of the commissions would be new and would assist areas in the southeastern United States and areas along the Mexican and Canadian borders; two of the commissions would replace existing Authorities in the Delta and northern Great Plains regions. The bill would establish uniform administrative structures and responsibilities for the commissions, and authorize the commissions to provide financial assistance for projects and programs in their respective regions to develop transportation and infrastructure, provide job skills training and support business development.

The Southwest border region, as defined in the bill, includes all counties within 150 miles of the United States-Mexico border. This region contains 11 counties in New Mexico, 65 counties in Texas, 10 counties in Arizona, and 7 counties in California, with a combined population of approximately 29 million.

According to research compiled by the Interagency Task Force on the Economic Development of the Southwest Border, 20 percent of the residents in my region live below the poverty level, unemployment rates often reach as high as five times the national average, and a lack of adequate access to capital has created economic disparities, making it difficult for businesses to start up in the region. Border communities have long endured a depressed economy and low-paying jobs. Our economic challenges partly stem from our position as a border community.

Economic development in border communities is difficult to stimulate without assistance from the government, private sector, and community organizations. H.R. 3246 would help foster planning to encourage infrastructure improvements, technology deployment, education and workforce training, and community development through entrepreneurship.

Modeled in part after the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Southwest Border Regional Authority and other Authorities would follow four guiding principles:

First, the Authorities would fund proposals designed at the local level followed by approval at the State level in order to meet regional economic development goals;

Second, projects leading to the creation of a diversified regional economy would be prioritized. Currently, States and counties often are forced to compete against each other for limited funding;

Third, the Authorities would be independent agencies. This would prevent them from having to attempt to satisfy another Federal agency's mission requirements when determining which projects to fund; and

Finally, the Authorities would be comprised of one Senate-confirmed Federal representative and the governors of the States of jurisdiction.

For too long, many areas of our country including the Southwest border region have been ignored, overlooked, and underfunded. We need to recognize the challenges facing these underserved areas and help them make the most of their many assets. I believe the Authorities created in the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007 would go a long way toward achieving the goal of economic prosperity in some of the poorest regions of our country.

Again, I would like to thank Chairman OBERSTAR for his leadership on this issue and look forward to the implementation of this important legislation.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3246, a bill to provide a comprehensive regional approach to economic and infrastructure development in the most severely economically distressed regions in the Nation.

H.R. 3246, the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007, reauthorizes two existing commissions, the Delta Regional Commission and the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission, and establishes three new regional economic development commissions: the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission, the Southwest Border Regional Commission, and the Northern Border Regional Commission. These Commissions will address problems of systemic poverty and underdevelopment in their respective regions.

This legislation authorizes all of these regional commissions under a common framework of administration and management, modeled after the procedures for the highly successful Appalachian Regional Commission. By providing a uniform set of procedures, this bill provides a consistent method for distributing economic development funds and ensures a comprehensive regional approach to economic and infrastructure development in the most severely distressed regions in the country.

H.R. 3246 authorizes \$250 million per year for fiscal years 2008 through 2012 for each commission to provide vital assistance for the development of our Nation's most chronically poor and distressed regions.

Each of the three new commissions authorized by this bill serves a unique need. The Southwest border region includes all counties within 150 miles of the United States-Mexico border. This region contains 11 counties in New Mexico, 65 counties in Texas, 10 counties in Arizona, and 7 counties in California for a combined population of approximately 29 million people. According to research compiled by the Interagency Task Force on the Economic Development of the Southwest Border, 20 percent of the residents in this region of the Nation live below the poverty level, and unemployment rates often reach as high as five times the national unemployment rate. A lack of adequate access to capital has created economic disparities and made it difficult for businesses to start up in the region.

The northern border region stretches from Maine to New York. While the region enjoys abundant natural resources and is rich in potential, it lags behind much of the Nation in economic growth, and its people have not shared equitably in the Nation's prosperity. The region's historic reliance on a few basic industries and agriculture has failed to provide a diverse enough economic base for vigorous, self-sustaining growth. In the countries in this region, 12.5 percent of the population lives in

poverty, median household income is more than \$6,500 below the national average, and unemployment through layoffs in traditional manufacturing industries is persistent. The population grew only 0.6 percent between 1990 and 2000, during which time the U.S. population rose by 13.2 percent, indicating significant out-migration and loss of young people.

The southeastern region of the United States includes the coastal and central portions of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida. Approximately 40 percent of the counties in this region have had 20 percent or more of their citizens living in poverty, on average, during the last 30 years. The area has also faced record unemployment. Additionally, this region has experienced natural disasters at a rate of two to three times greater than any other region of the U.S. The southeastern region is one of the last areas of the country without a Federal authority dedicated to ending poverty and strengthening communities. The Southeast Crescent Authority (SECA) authorizes a local-State-Federal partnership to lift citizens in this geographic area out of poverty and create jobs by targeting the communities with the greatest need.

This bill has broad bipartisan support, and the committee has held a series of hearings regarding the need for these economic development commissions. The model for economic development through partnerships between the Federal Government and State and local governments has worked extremely well in the case of the Appalachian Regional Commission, and I am certain it will continue to serve to enhance the lives and livelihoods of citizens in other regions.

I submit an exchange of letters regarding jurisdiction, and I support HR. 3246 and urge its passage.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
Washington, DC, September 17, 2007.

Hon. JAMES L. OBERSTAR,
Chairman, Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN OBERSTAR: I am writing to confirm our mutual understanding regarding consideration of H.R. 3246, the "Regional Infrastructure Development Act of 2007," which was referred to the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and reported to the House on September 7. Specifically, I appreciate your acknowledgement of the Committee on Agriculture's jurisdictional interest in provisions contained in the bill that affect rural development programs.

As you know, clause 1(a) of Rule X gives the Committee on Agriculture jurisdiction over bills that affect rural development programs. Given the importance of moving this bill forward promptly, I would be glad to waive any consideration of this measure as to allow its timely consideration by the entire House of Representatives. However, I do so with the understanding that this procedural route will not be construed to prejudice the Agriculture Committee's jurisdictional interests and prerogatives on this bill, or any other similar legislation, and will not be considered as precedent for consideration of matters of jurisdictional interest to the Agriculture Committee in the future.

Furthermore, in the event a conference with the Senate is requested in this matter, I would ask you to support the Committee on Agriculture's request to be represented.

Thank you very much for your courtesy in this matter and I look forward to your con-

tinued cooperation between our Committees as we deal with these matters in the future.

Sincerely,

COLLIN C. PETERSON
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, COM-
MITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE,

Washington, DC, September 17, 2007.

Hon. COLLIN C. PETERSON,
Chairman, Committee on Agriculture, House of
Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN PETERSON: Thank you for your September 17, 2007 letter regarding H.R. 3246, the "Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007". Your support for this legislation and your assistance in ensuring its timely consideration are greatly appreciated.

I agree that provisions in the bill are of jurisdictional interest to the Committee on Agriculture. I acknowledge that by forgoing a sequential referral, your Committee is not relinquishing its jurisdiction and I will fully support your request to be represented in a House-Senate conference on those provisions over which the Committee on Agriculture has jurisdiction in H.R. 3246.

I value your cooperation and look forward to working with you as we move ahead with this important economic development legislation.

Sincerely,

JAMES L. OBERSTAR,
Chairman.

Mr. McINTYRE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007, which provides a comprehensive regional approach to economic and infrastructure development in the most severely economically distressed regions in the Nation. This bill includes legislation that I have introduced in every Congress since the 107th Congress that will establish a SouthEast Crescent Authority for economic development. The authority would cover the southeastern portion of the United States, encompassing the States of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida, which have all seen poverty rates well above the national average coupled with record unemployment—the double whammy—poverty and unemployment.

I would like to personally thank the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman OBERSTAR and his Ranking Member, Mr. MICA, and the Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Economic Development Chairwoman HOLMES NORTON and the Ranking Member, Mr. GRAVES, for their hard work and dedication to our Nation's most economically disadvantaged regions. It is their compassion, cooperation, and commitment that brought us here today, and I applaud them for their efforts to continue this cause, and I thank them for their friendship and support.

As a Member that represents a district from one of the Southern States that has experienced job growth stagnation, I have seen firsthand the restructuring of the South's economy. Jobs in textiles and furniture-making have decreased substantially while jobs in retail, services, and the professions have rushed in. Although a more high-tech and globally competitive economy has enabled new opportunities for employment in the South, it has also dismantled jobs long held by employees who have few prospects for shifting to other jobs with comparable pay. In addition, the seven States of the SECA region also experience natural disasters at a rate of two to three

times greater than any other region of the United States, and this vulnerability to natural disasters further exacerbates the ability to recover from economic distress.

Modeled primarily after the successful Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), the SouthEast Crescent Authority hopes to enjoy a local-State-Federal partnership to lift our citizens out of poverty and create jobs. With the Federal allocation of funding, SECA seeks to target monies to programs which address one or more of the following criteria for community betterment: (1) infrastructure, (2) education and job training, (3) health care, (4) entrepreneurship, and (5) leadership development. Those communities with the greatest need will be targeted, and grants will be made according to the degree of distress.

Mr. Speaker, the time is now to work to change this pattern and ensure that those individuals—like those in my district who work in textiles or manufacturing—and those communities—like the many rural communities that have been affected—are not left behind. And I am confident that the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007 that is before us today will be able to do just that. It's the least we can do to act now and help "the least of these" who have suffered enough and to help bolster economic progress and possibility. Thank you, and may God bless our efforts to help expand economic opportunities for all of our citizens and their families.

Mr. ARCURI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007.

I want to thank the distinguished Chairwoman of the Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management Subcommittee, Ms. NORTON, the Full Committee Chairman, and the Ranking Members for delivering this legislation which authorizes three new economic development commissions—the Northern Border, Southeast Crescent, and Southwest Border Regional Commissions—and reauthorizes the successful Delta and Northern Great Plains Regional Commissions. These Commissions will help bring economic development to regions of our country that desperately need it.

Over the last several decades, Upstate New York has had a consistent pattern of economic distress as a result of substantial losses in the manufacturing sector, coupled with aging infrastructure and lack of opportunities for a skilled workforce. My district alone has seen a staggering loss of more than 14,000 manufacturing jobs between 2000 and 2005. However, this isn't an anomaly, it is extremely characteristic of several States in the Northeast. A targeted regional approach can help bring back economic vitality to these regions.

This bipartisan legislation creates a Northern Border Regional Commission that will bring much needed job creation and economic development resources to the Northeast region. Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Upstate New York will all benefit tremendously from the establishment of this Commission because it will assess and address the very specific needs, assets, and challenges of the region as a whole.

The Commission will create a Federal-State partnership where local development districts and other non-profits bring project ideas and priorities to the Commission from the local level to promote economic development

through regional planning, technical assistance, and funding of projects aimed at encouraging economic prosperity.

This Northern Border Regional Commission is modeled after the very successful Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) approach, an idea conceived by Chairman OBERSTAR, over 40 years ago.

Simply put, the numbers speak for themselves. Since its creation, the ARC has reduced the number of distressed counties in its region from 219 to 100, cut the poverty rate from 31 percent to 15 percent, and helped 1,400 businesses create 26,000 new jobs. I welcome the creation of similar Commissions with this kind of proven track record.

The Northern Border Regional Commission not only will extend benefits to economically distressed counties in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, but will also allow Upstate New York counties like Oneida, Herkimer, Cayuga, and Seneca to enjoy the same benefits their neighboring counties in the Southern Tier enjoy under the Appalachian Regional Commission.

We need to act now to ensure that every American has access to job training, employment-related education, and high-tech infrastructure, so that we can retain and grow our global competitive edge. And I am confident the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act will help us achieve that end.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation which will help create parity for economically anemic regions across the country.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3246, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. 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 motion will be postponed.

EXTENDING THE AUTHORITIES OF THE OVERSEAS PRIVATE INVESTMENT CORPORATION

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3527) to extend for two months the authorities of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3527

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

SECTION 1. TEMPORARY EXTENSION OF OPIC PROGRAMS.

Section 235(a)(2) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2195(a)(2)) is amended by striking "September 30, 2007" and inserting "November 30, 2007".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from

American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from American Samoa.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 3527.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this legislation and yield myself as much time as I may consume.

This House recently approved legislation that would reauthorize the Overseas Private Investment Corporation for an additional 4 years. The bill would ensure that OPIC continues its critical mission of supporting private investment to accomplish important public sector goals in the developing world, while, at the same time, enhancing OPIC's transparency and accountability.

The Senate is considering similar legislation, Mr. Speaker, and the Foreign Affairs Committee looks forward to working with that body so that we can send the bill to the President for his signature.

While the Senate considers this legislation, OPIC's current authority expires at the end of this month. In order to provide the Senate with additional time to take up this legislation and ensure that the corporation continues its critical work, my friend and colleague, the good chairman of the subcommittee, Mr. SHERMAN from California, has crafted this proposed bill that provides OPIC with the authority to operate for an additional 2 months beyond September 30, 2007.

□ 1445

I do want to commend our distinguished chairman of the committee, Mr. LANTOS; and our senior ranking member, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, for their support and leadership in bringing this legislation to the floor. I recommend this legislation for passage, and I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

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

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

I rise in support of the bill, H.R. 3527, a bill that would extend the authorization of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation until November 30 of 2007.

Mr. Speaker, on July 23, as my good friend Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA just said, the House passed H.R. 2798, a bill to reauthorize OPIC through September 30 of 2011. That measure had previously been favorably reported by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs by a vote of 26-5, totally bipartisan. To date, how-

ever, the other body has not acted, requiring us to take this stop-gap measure to continue the authorization for this legislation. We hope they act soon on the Senate side so that the President can be sent a bipartisan bill that can be signed.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3527.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. 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 motion will be postponed.

AUTHORIZING THE PEACE CORPS TO PROVIDE SEPARATION PAY FOR HOST COUNTRY RESIDENT PERSONAL SERVICES CONTRACTORS

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3528) to provide authority to the Peace Corps to provide separation pay for host country resident personal services contractors of the Peace Corps.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3528

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

SECTION 1. AUTHORIZATION FOR PEACE CORPS TO PROVIDE SEPARATION PAY FOR HOST COUNTRY RESIDENT PERSONAL SERVICES CONTRACTORS OF THE PEACE CORPS.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF FUND.—There is established in the Treasury of the United States a fund for the Peace Corps to provide separation pay for host country resident personal services contractors of the Peace Corps.

(b) FUNDING.—The Director of the Peace Corps may deposit in the fund established under subsection (a)—

(1) amounts previously obligated and not canceled to provide the separation pay described in such subsection; and

(2) amounts obligated for fiscal years after fiscal year 2006 for current and future costs of providing such separation pay.

(c) AVAILABILITY.—Beginning in fiscal year 2007, amounts deposited in the fund established under subsection (a) shall be available without fiscal year limitation for severance, retirement, or other separation payments to host country resident personal services contractors of the Peace Corps in countries where such payments are legally authorized.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA)