

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.

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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)

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 all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks.

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 yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, again I rise in strong support of this legislation and thank my good friend, the gentleman from New Jersey, on the other side of the aisle for his support in managing this legislation. I also want to thank the leadership of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Chairman LANTOS and our senior ranking member, Ms. ROSLEHTINEN, for their leadership and support of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, to millions around the globe, Peace Corps is the "human face" of America. For more than 46 years, the Peace Corps has helped the people of developing countries meet their needs for trained men and women and in the process has promoted a better understanding of America.

The legislation before the House today is a technical bill requested by the administration. It will facilitate the provision of separation pay to the many foreign nationals who work for the Peace Corps overseas. The bill accomplishes this objective in an open and transparent manner to ensure the complete accountability to the American taxpayers.

With that, 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 H.R. 3528, legislation introduced by our distinguished chairman, TOM LANTOS, that will help the Peace Corps eliminate a small but important discrepancy between its accounting and its expenditures.

Under foreign local law and the terms of their contracts, the Peace Corps is frequently required to make separation payments to personal service contractors overseas, for example, a lump sum payment equal to 1 month's salary for every year of service. The Peace Corps is required to account for that liability on its books every year even though those funds are not paid out to the contractor until the end of their service with the Peace Corps, which sometimes can be more than a decade.

However, because unspent funds revert back to the U.S. Treasury 5 years after they are obligated, the Peace Corps must pay obligations from beyond that time frame out of current

operating funds. The bill would create a fund into which those obligations could be paid as they accrue, which can be used only for that purpose. Since this does not affect Peace Corps appropriations or obligations, there are no costs associated with this fix.

This also provides us with an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to again commend the Peace Corps and its many volunteers for the important work that they do in building bridges of understanding between the American people and communities, families, and individuals overseas.

We support this legislation.

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. 3528.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

VIETNAM HUMAN RIGHTS ACT OF
2007

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3096) to promote freedom and democracy in Vietnam, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3096

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the "Vietnam Human Rights Act of 2007".

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

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

Sec. 2. Findings.

Sec. 3. Purpose.

TITLE I—PROHIBITION ON NONHUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM

Sec. 101. Bilateral nonhumanitarian assistance.

TITLE II—ASSISTANCE TO SUPPORT DEMOCRACY IN VIETNAM

Sec. 201. Assistance.

TITLE III—UNITED STATES PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Sec. 301. Radio Free Asia transmissions to Vietnam.

Sec. 302. United States educational and cultural exchange programs with Vietnam.

TITLE IV—UNITED STATES REFUGEE POLICY

Sec. 401. Refugee resettlement for nationals of Vietnam.

TITLE V—ANNUAL REPORT ON PROGRESS TOWARD FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY IN VIETNAM

Sec. 501. Annual report.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) The relationship between the United States and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has grown substantially over the past 12 years, with annual trade between the 2 countries reaching over \$9,000,000,000 per year.

(2) The Government of Vietnam's transition toward greater economic freedom and trade has not been matched by greater political freedom and substantial improvements in human rights for many Vietnamese.

(3) The United States Congress agreed to Vietnam becoming an official member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2006, amidst assurances that the Vietnamese Government was steadily improving its human rights record and would continue to do so.

(4) Vietnam remains a one-party state, ruled and controlled by the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), which continues to deny the right of citizens to change their government.

(5) Although in recent years the National Assembly of Vietnam has played an increasingly active role as a forum for highlighting local concerns, corruption, and inefficiency, the National Assembly remains subject to the direction of the CPV and the CPV maintains control over the selection of candidates in national and local elections.

(6) The Government of Vietnam forbids public challenge to the legitimacy of the one-party state, restricts freedoms of opinion, the press, and association and tightly limits access to the Internet and telecommunication.

(7) Since Vietnam's accession to the WTO on January 11, 2007, the Vietnamese Government arbitrarily arrested and imprisoned several individuals for their peaceful advocacy of democracy, including Father Nguyen Van Ly and human rights lawyers Nguyen Van Dai and Le Thi Cong Nhan.

(8) The Government of Vietnam continues to detain, imprison, place under house arrest, convict, or otherwise restrict persons for the peaceful expression of dissenting political or religious views, including Bui Kim Thanh, Hang Tan Phat, Truong Quoc Huy, Vu Hoang Hai, Nguyen Ngoc Quang, Pham Ba Hai, Dr. Le Nguyen Sang, Huynh Nguyen Dao, Nguyen Bac Truyen, Tran Quoc Hien, Nguyen Tan Hoanh, Tran Thi Le Hang, Doan Huu Chuong, Doan Van Dien, Le Ba Triet, Nguyen Tuan, Tran Thi Thuy Trang, Nguyen Phong, Nguyen Binh Thanh, Hoang Thi Anh Dao, Le Thi Le Hang, Tran Khai Thanh Thuy, Ho Thi Bich Khuong, Hong Trung, Danh Tol, Kim Muot, Thach Thuong, Ly Suong, Ly Hoang, Nguyen Van Tho, Le Van Soc, Nguyen Van Thuy, Duong Thi Tron, Truong Minh Duc, and Dr. Pham Hong Son, among others.

(9)(A) The Government of Vietnam continues to limit freedom of religion and restrict the operation of religious organizations.

(B) Despite reported progress in church openings and legal registrations of religious venues, the Government of Vietnam has halted most positive actions since the Department of State lifted the "country of particular concern" (CPC) designation for Vietnam in November 2006.

(C) Unregistered ethnic minority Protestant congregations suffer severe abuses because of actions by the Government of Vietnam, which have included forced renunciations of faith, the arrest and harassment of pastors, the withholding of social programs provided for the general population, confiscation and destruction of property, and subjection to severe beatings.

(D) The Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) suffers persecutions as the Government of Vietnam continues to restrict