

200th Anniversary Commission of the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. It was 200 years ago in 1807, when first the British Parliament and then the U.S. Congress abolished the then 300 year old practice of forcibly removing Africans from their homes along the Western coast of that continent to provide free labor for the empires of Europe in the New World.

The triangular trade would link the peoples of Africa, Europe and the Americas in a chain of blood, power, money, imperialism and despair and set the tone for our modern day relationships as none of our ancestors were left untouched by its sheer brutality.

By the time it was all over, the world's first massive attempt at globalization, would profoundly change it from corner to corner and would leave behind many of the social reverberations of race, class and poverty that we as a world community struggle with today.

As we recognize this momentous anniversary and the way it has shaped the lives of African descendants in the Western Hemisphere, and as one of those descendants I want to take the opportunity to call attention to the end of enslavement of Africans in my own district, the U.S. Virgin Islands, which was then the Danish West Indies. The abolition of the slave trade did not immediately end slavery. It was not until 1848 in response to an uprising by enslaved Africans demanding emancipation that slavery was ended there. It is a day which we celebrate on July 3rd of every year, and this year will be the 160th Anniversary of that important event.

As we approach that anniversary it is relevant to note the dialogue that the people of the Virgin Islands and the people of Denmark have embarked upon regarding reparations—not in terms of monetary compensation, but in education, restoration and reconciliation efforts that can finally close that sad chapter of our history and our relationship. While discussions have not taken place at a government level, we anticipate that these will begin in the near future and we look forward to the opportunities this could make available to both sides.

Mr. Speaker, returning to the resolution before us, it is important that we mark the end of this dark period in world history and human relations and that we study and commemorate the events that led up to the beginning, the middle and the end of slavery. It is important that the civic, historical, educational, religious and economic activities planned on the state and national levels be used for the American people to look back and seek understanding of that time and the legacy that it has left behind.

As we commemorate with speeches and conferences and exhibitions, let us remember that there is still human trafficking taking place today and that we should be as adamant and as vigilant as our forbears of 200 years ago, in seeing to its end.

□ 1315

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3432, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the

rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title was amended so as to read: "A bill to establish the Commission on the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CONGRESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT AMENDMENTS

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3571) to amend the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 to permit individuals who have served as employees of the Office of Compliance to serve as Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director, or General Counsel of the Office, and to permit individuals appointed to such positions to serve one additional term.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3571

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

SECTION 1. PERMITTING FORMER OFFICE OF COMPLIANCE EMPLOYEES TO SERVE IN APPOINTED POSITIONS WITH OFFICE.

Section 301(d)(2)(B) of the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 (2 U.S.C. 1381(d)(2)(B)) is amended by striking "legislative branch," and inserting "legislative branch (other than the Office)."

SEC. 2. PERMITTING ADDITIONAL TERM FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS, AND GENERAL COUNSEL OF OFFICE OF COMPLIANCE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—

(1) EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.—Section 302(a)(3) of the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 (2 U.S.C. 1382(a)(3)) is amended by striking "a single term" and inserting "not more than 2 terms".

(2) DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS.—Section 302(b)(2) of such Act (2 U.S.C. 1382(b)(2)) is amended by striking "a single term" and inserting "not more than 2 terms".

(3) GENERAL COUNSEL.—Section 302(c)(5) of such Act (2 U.S.C. 1382(c)(5)) is amended by striking "a single term" and inserting "not more than 2 terms".

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to an individual who is first appointed to the position of Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director, or General Counsel of the Office of Compliance after the date of the enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BRADY) and the gentleman from California (Mr. McCARTHY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks in the RECORD on H.R. 3571.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the Office of Compliance is an independent agency that was tasked by Congress to oversee the administration of the Congressional Accountability Act, which provides congressional and legislative branch employees with workplace protections enjoyed by other Federal and private sector workers.

Being responsible for the oversight of 12 workplace protection, health care, labor and civil rights laws is a huge task that requires a well-seasoned and experienced staff. Unfortunately, when the Congressional Accountability Act was signed into law in 1995, the law barred the Office of Compliance from promoting from within. This lack of flexibility threatens to impact the effectiveness of the office by preventing them from building on the expertise gained by certain personnel.

This legislation would lift the current ban on hiring former legislative branch employees within 4 years of their appointment to the Office of Compliance, as well as allowing for the reappointment of executive staff for one additional term. Congress passed legislation during both the 108th Congress and 109th Congress to temporarily address the issue of reappointment. Both pieces of legislation, H.R. 5122 and H.R. 3071, were noncontroversial and passed both Chambers unanimously.

Let us continue to provide the Office of Compliance with the tools needed to carry out their mandate of ensuring that all of our workers' rights are protected.

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

Mr. McCARTHY of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3571, which provides needed flexibility for the Office of Compliance to fill critical positions within the office and to maintain institutional knowledge within the office.

The Office of Compliance provides an important function in the legislative branch. It is charged with administering and enforcing the Congressional Accountability Act. The act, one of the first considered and passed by the 104th Congress with the new Republican congressional majority, required Congress to comply with the same employment and workplace safety laws that applied to the private sector, including the Americans with Disabilities Act, Occupational Safety and Health Act, and the Family and Medical Leave Act.

Current law governing the office places limits on the appointment and tenure of the staff and board. These limits, placed in part to preserve the integrity and independence of the office, have unfortunately resulted in the board's inability to fill vacancies with the best-qualified candidates.

In addition, GAO has recommended, and the board agreed, that Congress amend the law to allow for reappointment of board members and staff to an

additional term in the office to maintain institutional continuity and to “prevent the loss of critical organizational knowledge” within the office.

This bill is a commonsense adjustment of current law, and I recommend my colleagues support the legislation.

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

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I urge passage of this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BRADY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3571.

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.

FEDERAL PROTECTIVE SERVICE GUARD CONTRACTING REFORM ACT OF 2007

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3068) to prohibit the award of contracts to provide guard services under the contract security guard program of the Federal Protective Service to a business concern that is owned, controlled, or operated by an individual who has been convicted of a felony, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3068

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 “Federal Protective Service Guard Contracting Reform Act of 2007”.

SEC. 2. FEDERAL PROTECTIVE SERVICE CONTRACTS.

(a) *PROHIBITION ON AWARD OF CONTRACTS TO ANY BUSINESS CONCERN OWNED, CONTROLLED, OR OPERATED BY AN INDIVIDUAL CONVICTED OF A FELONY.*—The Secretary of Homeland Security may not award a contract for the provision of guard services under the contract security guard program of the Federal Protective Service to any business concern that is owned, controlled, or operated by an individual who has been convicted of a felony.

(b) *REGULATIONS.*—Not later than 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall issue regulations to carry out this section.

(c) *IMPLEMENTATION.*—In this section, the term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Homeland Security acting through the Assistant Secretary of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BRADY) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GRAVES) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. 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. 3068.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I would like to note that I am here for the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) and if she does come in, I will relinquish my duties.

But in the meantime, Mr. Speaker, this bill, H.R. 3068, as amended, is the result of two oversight hearings held by the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee that examined the role of Federal Protective Service, FPS, in providing security for our Nation’s public buildings. There was evidence of serious allegations of wrongdoing, chaos, and irregularities in contracting employment of private security guards who protect Federal employees and facilities.

This legislation intends to preserve the security of the country’s most sensitive buildings. Due to the security needs of a Federal building, it is surprising that an individual with a felony conviction would hold a contract for security services in a Federal building.

This bill codifies the commonsense approach to providing security for Federal buildings. Specifically, this bill directs the Secretary of Homeland Security not to award any security guard contracts through the Federal Protective Service to any company that is owned, controlled, or operated by a convicted felon. The bill would ensure that contractors are capable, responsible and ethical as required by the Federal Acquisition Regulations.

Contract security officers are a critical component of Federal strategies to protect the safety and security of Federal employees, visitors to Federal buildings and the surrounding community. Given the critical role these guards play in Federal security, this bill will hold owners of companies who provide security to Federal buildings to the highest standards. I urge all Members to vote for H.R. 3068, as amended.

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

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I don’t have any other speakers and I am going to talk about the bill, but I know it is Ms. NORTON’s bill and she may want to say something before I do. I would reserve the balance of my time and would like to speak after her if that is all right.

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. I ask unanimous consent to relinquish control of the time to the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON).

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

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Missouri, and particularly thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania in my absence for assuming the responsibility because I was at a hearing on Blackwater.

H.R. 3068, as amended, the Federal Protective Service Guard Contracting Reform Act of 2007, ensures that Federal Protective Service guard contractors are “capable, responsible, and ethical,” and those are the words of the regulation. I want to thank Chairman OBERSTAR for facilitating early consideration of this bill, and for the leadership on both sides, including the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management Ranking Member GRAVES for understanding its importance and for their efforts in support of the bill.

The Federal Protective Service Guard Contracting Reform Act prohibits the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security from contracting with any security guard service that is owned, controlled or operated by an individual who has been convicted of a felony. The bill would eliminate proxy operation by felons who are relatives, spouses or others.

H.R. 3068, as amended, is a result of two oversight hearings Mr. GRAVES and I held that examined the role of the Federal Protective Service in providing security for the Nation’s public buildings. There was evidence of serious allegations of wrongdoing, chaos and irregularities in the contracting and employment of private security guards whose mission it is to protect Federal employees and facilities.

Our subcommittee worked closely with appropriate Department of Homeland Security officials to eliminate the backlog in payments to guards and to correct FPS mismanagement that risked the security of Federal employees and visitors. FPS guards, like guards employed by the Federal Government, these security guards are used on our most sensitive buildings, including here in the Nation’s Capital and the National Capital region where your most secure facilities are located.

Therefore, it was surprising to learn that an individual with a felony conviction would hold a contract for security services in a Federal building, especially here, but frankly anywhere in the United States in the post-9/11 climate.

It was clear that this bill was necessary when our subcommittee learned at a hearing in June that an FPS security guard contractor had failed to pay 600 D.C. area Federal security officers and to make other important benefit payments to pensions, health benefits and the like. Our subcommittee intervened when an action by the FPS and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement, a division of DHS where FPS is placed, was reported to us.