

great deal to be desired. Since he took office, gas prices have doubled, and home heating costs have tripled.

While President Bush remains out of touch, House Democrats acted last week to ease some of that burden. We passed legislation that repeals unnecessary tax subsidies to big oil companies, which reported record profits last year and last month. Instead, the subsidies will go towards tax incentives for clean, renewable energy.

Mr. Speaker, President Bush should recognize that his energy policy has failed the American people, and that he should join us in supporting legislation that will reduce our dependence on foreign oil.

GORHAM PAPER MILL

(Mr. HODES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HODES. Mr. Speaker, the people of Gorham, New Hampshire are hurting. Over 160 workers will lose their jobs at the Fraser Paper Mill next month. Decades ago, the paper industry was thriving throughout Coos and Grafton Counties in New Hampshire. But with new trade policies that ship our jobs overseas, these jobs are disappearing faster, and towns across northern New Hampshire are hurting.

In February, Fraser Paper announced that it will lay off 167 jobs from their facility in Gorham. The news broke just months after the Wausau Paper Mill closed its doors in Groveton and left 303 workers without jobs, and nearly 2 years after Fraser Paper shut down its Berlin site, which resulted in the loss of 250 jobs in the region. I will visit Coos County this Friday to meet with workers in Gorham, Groveton, and Berlin to hear their stories.

I am working to take action to stand up for these working families and their communities. We have already helped with the bipartisan economic stimulus plan that puts more money in the hands of working families, and boosts our economy, but the people of Gorham and the surrounding communities and workers in America need additional help.

I plan on submitting legislation to keep mills and business and jobs like these in New Hampshire. I urge my colleagues to stand with me and stand with our working men and women.

STEM CELL DEBATE

(Mr. LANGEVIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, in recent months, researchers have created apparent embryonic stem cells from reprogrammed adult skin cells. This is an exciting new breakthrough, known as induced pluripotent stem cells, or iPS, which is an important and incredible milestone. However, it should not halt our efforts towards embryonic stem research. The iPS method is still in its

earliest stages, and there is widespread debate among the scientific community as to the safety and effectiveness of its practical application.

Embryonic stem cell research remains the gold standard for potential therapeutic use. Further, it has laid the foundation of scientific knowledge that has made these recent discoveries possible. We should not abandon one area of research just because we have made progress in another. We must continue our investment, both public and private, into all areas of responsible stem cell research, whether that is adult stem cell research, embryonic stem cell research, or this new, exciting iPS method. It is the right thing to do. It offers great potential to offering cures for millions of people suffering from some of life's most challenging chronic conditions and diseases. The hope of millions of Americans depends on it.

ON FISA, PRESIDENT AND REPUBLICANS PLAY POLITICS WITH NATIONAL SECURITY

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, neither the public nor the press are buying into the scare tactics coming out of the White House and the Republican leadership here on Capitol Hill about the expiration of the President's supposed Protect America Act. Here are just a few of the editorial examples in papers from around the Nation.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch wrote that, "The President's assertion that our country is in more danger of an attack is patently ridiculous." The Miami Herald writes that, "Once again, the administration has claimed that if it doesn't get its way, the terrorists win. Unfortunately, the administration is resorting to exaggeration and hyperbole to make its case." The Syracuse Post Standard concluded that "Congress should take the time to get this legislation right."

Mr. Speaker, Congressional Democrats are serious about passing a strong FISA law that gives our intelligence community the legal tools necessary to protect our national security, and that is why bicameral negotiations continue. But, unfortunately, Republicans refuse a seat at that table.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CLAY). Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

RECONSTRUCTION AND STABILIZATION CIVILIAN MANAGEMENT ACT OF 2008

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1084) to amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956, and the Foreign Service Act of 1980 to build operational readiness in civilian agencies, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1084

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 "Reconstruction and Stabilization Civilian Management Act of 2008".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

(1) In June 2004, the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (referred to as the "Coordinator") was established in the Department of State with the mandate to lead, coordinate, and institutionalize United States Government civilian capacity to prevent or prepare for post-conflict situations and help reconstruct and stabilize a country or region that is at risk of, in, or is in transition from, conflict or civil strife.

(2) In December 2005, the Coordinator's mandate was reaffirmed by the National Security Presidential Directive 44, which instructed the Secretary of State, and at the Secretary's direction, the Coordinator, to coordinate and lead integrated United States Government efforts, involving all United States departments and agencies with relevant capabilities, to prepare, plan for, and conduct reconstruction and stabilization operations.

(3) National Security Presidential Directive 44 assigns to the Secretary, with the Coordinator's assistance, the lead role to develop reconstruction and stabilization strategies, ensure civilian interagency program and policy coordination, coordinate interagency processes to identify countries at risk of instability, provide decision-makers with detailed options for an integrated United States Government response in connection with reconstruction and stabilization operations, and carry out a wide range of other actions, including the development of a civilian surge capacity to meet reconstruction and stabilization emergencies. The Secretary and the Coordinator are also charged with coordinating with the Department of Defense on reconstruction and stabilization responses, and integrating planning and implementing procedures.

(4) The Department of Defense issued Directive 3000.05, which establishes that stability operations are a core United States military mission that the Department of Defense must be prepared to conduct and support, provides guidance on stability operations that will evolve over time, and assigns responsibilities within the Department of Defense for planning, training, and preparing to conduct and support stability operations.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term "Administrator" means the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development.

(2) AGENCY.—The term “agency” means any entity included in chapter 1 of title 5, United States Code.

(3) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term “appropriate congressional committees” means the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate.

(4) DEPARTMENT.—Except as otherwise provided in this Act, the term “Department” means the Department of State.

(5) PERSONNEL.—The term “personnel” means individuals serving in any service described in section 2101 of title 5, United States Code, other than in the legislative or judicial branch.

(6) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of State.

SEC. 4. AUTHORITY TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND STABILIZATION CRISES.

Chapter 1 of part III of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2351 et seq.) is amended by inserting after section 617 the following new section:

“SEC. 618. ASSISTANCE FOR A RECONSTRUCTION AND STABILIZATION CRISIS.

“(a) ASSISTANCE.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—If the President determines that it is in the national security interests of the United States for United States civilian agencies or non-Federal employees to assist in reconstructing and stabilizing a country or region that is at risk of, in, or is in transition from, conflict or civil strife, the President may, in accordance with the provisions set forth in section 614(a)(3), subject to paragraph (2) of this subsection but notwithstanding any other provision of law, and on such terms and conditions as the President may determine, furnish assistance to such country or region for reconstruction or stabilization using funds under paragraph (3).

“(2) PRE-NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENT.—The President may not furnish assistance pursuant to paragraph (1) until five days (excepting Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays) after the requirements under section 614(a)(3) of this Act are carried out.

“(3) FUNDS.—The funds referred to in paragraph (1) are funds made available under any other provision of law and under other provisions of this Act, and transferred or reprogrammed for purposes of this section, and such transfer or reprogramming shall be subject to the procedures applicable to a notification under section 634A of this Act.

“(b) LIMITATION.—The authority contained in this section may be exercised only during fiscal years 2008, 2009, and 2010, except that the authority may not be exercised to furnish more than \$100,000,000 in any such fiscal year.”.

SEC. 5. RECONSTRUCTION AND STABILIZATION.

Title I of the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956 (22 U.S.C. 2651a et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“SEC. 62. RECONSTRUCTION AND STABILIZATION.

“(a) OFFICE OF THE COORDINATOR FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND STABILIZATION.—

“(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established within the Department of State the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization.

“(2) COORDINATOR FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND STABILIZATION.—The head of the Office shall be the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, who shall be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Coordinator shall report directly to the Secretary.

“(3) FUNCTIONS.—The functions of the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization shall include the following:

“(A) Monitoring, in coordination with relevant bureaus and offices of the Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), political and economic instability worldwide to anticipate the need for mobilizing United States and international assistance for the reconstruction and stabilization of a country or region that is at risk of, in, or are in transition from, conflict or civil strife.

“(B) Assessing the various types of reconstruction and stabilization crises that could occur and cataloging and monitoring the non-military resources and capabilities of agencies (as such term is defined in section 3 of the Reconstruction and Stabilization Civilian Management Act of 2008) that are available to address such crises.

“(C) Planning, in conjunction with USAID, to address requirements, such as demobilization, disarmament, rebuilding of civil society, policing, human rights monitoring, and public information, that commonly arise in reconstruction and stabilization crises.

“(D) Coordinating with relevant agencies to develop interagency contingency plans and procedures to mobilize and deploy civilian personnel and conduct reconstruction and stabilization operations to address the various types of such crises.

“(E) Entering into appropriate arrangements with agencies to carry out activities under this section and the Reconstruction and Stabilization Civilian Management Act of 2008.

“(F) Identifying personnel in State and local governments and in the private sector who are available to participate in the Civilian Reserve Corps established under subsection (b) or to otherwise participate in or contribute to reconstruction and stabilization activities.

“(G) Taking steps to ensure that training and education of civilian personnel to perform such reconstruction and stabilization activities is adequate and is carried out, as appropriate, with other agencies involved with stabilization operations.

“(H) Taking steps to ensure that plans for United States reconstruction and stabilization operations are coordinated with and complementary to reconstruction and stabilization activities of other governments and international and nongovernmental organizations, to improve effectiveness and avoid duplication.

“(I) Maintaining the capacity to field on short notice an evaluation team consisting of personnel from all relevant agencies to undertake on-site needs assessment.

“(b) RESPONSE READINESS CORPS.—

“(1) RESPONSE READINESS CORPS.—The Secretary, in consultation with the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development and the heads of other appropriate agencies of the United States Government, may establish and maintain a Response Readiness Corps (referred to in this section as the ‘Corps’) to provide assistance in support of reconstruction and stabilization operations in countries or regions that are at risk of, in, or are in transition from, conflict or civil strife. The Corps shall be composed of active and standby components consisting of United States Government personnel, including employees of the Department of State, the United States Agency for International Development, and other agencies who are recruited and trained (and employed in the case of the active component) to provide such assistance when deployed to do so by the Secretary to support the purposes of this Act.

“(2) CIVILIAN RESERVE CORPS.—The Secretary, in consultation with the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, may establish a Civilian Reserve Corps for which purpose the Sec-

retary is authorized to employ and train individuals who have the skills necessary for carrying out reconstruction and stabilization activities, and who have volunteered for that purpose. The Secretary may deploy members of the Civilian Reserve Corps pursuant to a determination by the President under section 618 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.

“(3) MITIGATION OF DOMESTIC IMPACT.—The establishment and deployment of any Civilian Reserve Corps shall be undertaken in a manner that will avoid substantively impairing the capacity and readiness of any State and local governments from which Civilian Reserve Corps personnel may be drawn.

“(c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of State such sums as may be necessary for fiscal years 2007 through 2010 for the Office and to support, educate, train, maintain, and deploy a Response Readiness Corps and a Civilian Reserve Corps.

“(d) EXISTING TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS.—The Secretary shall ensure that personnel of the Department, and, in coordination with the Administrator of USAID, that personnel of USAID, make use of the relevant existing training and education programs offered within the Government, such as those at the Center for Stabilization and Reconstruction Studies at the Naval Postgraduate School and the Interagency Training, Education, and After Action Review Program at the National Defense University.”.

SEC. 6. AUTHORITIES RELATED TO PERSONNEL.

(a) EXTENSION OF CERTAIN FOREIGN SERVICE BENEFITS.—The Secretary, or the head of any agency with respect to personnel of that agency, may extend to any individuals assigned, detailed, or deployed to carry out reconstruction and stabilization activities pursuant to section 62 of the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956 (as added by section 5 of this Act), the benefits or privileges set forth in sections 413, 704, and 901 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980 (22 U.S.C. 3973, 22 U.S.C. 4024, and 22 U.S.C. 4081) to the same extent and manner that such benefits and privileges are extended to members of the Foreign Service.

(b) AUTHORITY REGARDING DETAILS.—The Secretary is authorized to accept details or assignments of any personnel, and any employee of a State or local government, on a reimbursable or nonreimbursable basis for the purpose of carrying out this Act, and the head of any agency is authorized to detail or assign personnel of such agency on a reimbursable or nonreimbursable basis to the Department of State for purposes of section 62 of the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956, as added by section 5 of this Act.

SEC. 7. RECONSTRUCTION AND STABILIZATION STRATEGY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of State, in consultation with the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, shall develop an interagency strategy to respond to reconstruction and stabilization operations.

(b) CONTENTS.—The strategy required under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) Identification of and efforts to improve the skills sets needed to respond to and support reconstruction and stabilization operations in countries or regions that are at risk of, in, or are in transition from, conflict or civil strife.

(2) Identification of specific agencies that can adequately satisfy the skills sets referred to in paragraph (1).

(3) Efforts to increase training of Federal civilian personnel to carry out reconstruction and stabilization activities.

(4) Efforts to develop a database of proven and best practices based on previous reconstruction and stabilization operations.

(5) A plan to coordinate the activities of agencies involved in reconstruction and stabilization operations.

SEC. 8. ANNUAL REPORTS TO CONGRESS.

Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act and annually for each of the five years thereafter, the Secretary of State shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on the implementation of this Act. The report shall include detailed information on the following:

(1) Any steps taken to establish a Response Readiness Corps and a Civilian Reserve Corps, pursuant to section 62 of the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956 (as added by section 5 of this Act).

(2) The structure, operations, and cost of the Response Readiness Corps and the Civilian Reserve Corps, if established.

(3) How the Response Readiness Corps and the Civilian Reserve Corps coordinate, interact, and work with other United States foreign assistance programs.

(4) An assessment of the impact that deployment of the Civilian Reserve Corps, if any, has had on the capacity and readiness of any domestic agencies or State and local governments from which Civilian Reserve Corps personnel are drawn.

(5) The reconstruction and stabilization strategy required by section 7 and any annual updates to that strategy.

(6) Recommendations to improve implementation of subsection (b) of section 62 of the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956, including measures to enhance the recruitment and retention of an effective Civilian Reserve Corps.

(7) A description of anticipated costs associated with the development, annual sustainment, and deployment of the Civilian Reserve Corps.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 6 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I want to first thank our colleague and friend from California, a valuable member of the Appropriations Committee, an individual who has always had a long-term interest in the issue of capacity building in our international relations effort, Congressman SAM FARR, who introduced this vitally important legislation and who has an unwavering commitment to restoring the strength and expertise of U.S. civilian agencies.

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has been engaged in a stabilization or reconstruction operation once every 18 to 24 months. Dur-

ing the same period, the backbone of America's diplomatic and development might, the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development, has been substantially weakened by staff cuts, hiring freezes and consolidation.

Despite new hires, there are only 6,600 professional Foreign Service officers in the State Department. According to Secretary of Defense Gates, this is less than the personnel of one carrier battle group, and allegedly less than the number of active military band members.

Likewise, at a time when the United States is engaged in two massive stabilization and reconstruction efforts and countless other emergencies, USAID, America's premier development agency, barely has 1,000 Foreign Service officers. Compare that number to the height of the Cold War, when it had more than 4,500 Foreign Service officers with expertise in engineering, agricultural development, rule of law, and civil administration. In essence, we have created a situation where those who are best suited for complex stabilization missions simply aren't there.

Mr. Speaker, this personnel imbalance is unacceptable and dangerously shortsighted. Stabilization operations require expertise in smart skills, such as job creation, rule of law programs, fortification of police forces, and good governance training, which lies within America's civilian agencies. Amazingly, at a time we need to call on this expertise the most, the U.S. Government capacity for these skills is at its weakest.

We need look no further than Iraq to see the dangers of overburdening our military with stabilization and reconstruction activities for which they were not trained, nor for which they are best suited. As Secretary Gates aptly observed, "Brave men and women in uniform have stepped up to the task, with field artillerymen and tankers building schools and mentoring city councils, usually in a language they don't speak. But it is no replacement for the real thing, civilian involvement and expertise."

The U.S. needs experienced police officers to train local Iraqi counterparts. We need USAID personnel to assist with municipal administration, sewage treatment, banking, electricity, and thousands of other tasks. This bill aims to successfully address upcoming threats and prosecute the long-term fight against terror by fortifying the U.S. Government's civilian capacity to deal with instability, particularly in areas where terrorists thrive.

The Reconstruction and Stabilization Civilian Management Act of 2008 authorizes the establishment of a Readiness Response Corps to plug the gap regarding civilian capacity. The corps will include active and standby components composed of Federal employees, and a reserve component made up of civilian experts from State and local governments and nongovernmental organizations.

To effectively establish the corps, the bill includes several innovative personnel provisions which ensure that the State Department and other Federal employees will not be prejudiced by joining the corps and that the Secretary of State will have unambiguous authority to hire personnel appropriate for the corps, including experts from Federal, State and local agencies. The bill also authorizes the President to use up to \$100 million in any given fiscal year for the purposes of furnishing assistance to stabilize and reconstruct a country or region at risk.

Finally, the bill codifies the establishment of an Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization within the Department of State.

Mr. Speaker, we expect this bill to accomplish two key goals. In the short term, the bill will ease the burden on the Armed Forces by allowing the State Department to deploy civilians in crisis situations previously staffed by the military. In the long term, the bill will enable the U.S. Government to project "smart power" in situations that cry for such civilian expertise.

For these reasons, I thank my colleague, Mr. FARR, for introducing this legislation, and I urge all of my colleagues to support this legislation.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1084, the Reconstruction and Stabilization Civilian Management Act. I want to thank Chairman BERMAN; the gentleman from California (Mr. FARR), the author of the bill; and my dear friend, Mr. SAXTON, the lead Republican cosponsor of the legislation, for working to reach the bipartisan agreement before us.

The text we are considering today was finalized in consultation with the State Department and the White House. It provides the President and Secretary of State with the basic authorities they have been seeking for expanding reconstruction and stabilization activities in order to assist countries whose descent into internal crisis may endanger the national security interests of the United States.

The legislation formally creates and gives full legislative support to the 4-year-old office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization. It also provides the President with the authority to create a Federal Response Readiness Corps and a volunteer Civilian Reserve Corps, a proposal based on a December 2005 Presidential directive and which enjoys the support of a broad cross-section of U.S. agencies.

These new corps will work to prevent future conflicts overseas and ensure that we are better prepared to effectively address post-conflict scenarios in countries that are important to our Nation's security interests. The hope is that, by preorganizing and training qualified civilian personnel, any future reconstruction and stabilization operations can be better coordinated and

more effective in order to free up our Armed Forces to better focus on strategic military and security objectives.

It is important to note that the text before us provides these authorities in a limited, careful manner, subject to greater congressional oversight. In contrast with the original text and other proposed drafts, there are several things that today's suspension text does not do: It does not mandate specific funding levels, and limits funding authorities to a 3-year trial period, from fiscal year 2008 through 2010; it does not create additional budget draw-down authority for emergency peacekeeping assistance; it does not mandate a minimum number of Civilian Reserve Corps personnel; and it does not include special personnel authorities such as waivers to allow dual compensation of Federal retirees or an increase in the premium pay cap.

Although we are attempting to create a system that is better equipped to intervene more effectively in foreign crises, we are not intending to lower the threshold for U.S. involvement in such situations. This is not an invitation to "nation building." For this reason, the amended text requires a Presidential national security interest determination and advance congressional notification before any deployment of the corps to a country in crisis.

□ 1045

We also intend that these activities be conducted in a transparent and fiscally responsible manner. Toward that end, the text includes an annual worldwide cap of \$100 million on all reconstruction and stabilization assistance provided under the act.

In order to mitigate the potential domestic impact, the text we are considering today mandates that the Civilian Reserve Corps be staffed in a way that does not diminish the capacity of State or local governments from which the volunteers may be drawn. It also charges the Office of the Coordinator to avoid duplication with other U.S. foreign assistance activities. Finally, it requires enhanced reporting to Congress on the structure, operation and cost of core operations, their relations to other U.S. foreign assistance efforts, and any impact on U.S. domestic readiness and capabilities.

I am gratified that we are able to reach this compromise, and look forward to working together in the future to ensure the success of this and other U.S. foreign assistance programs. I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan measure.

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

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 4 minutes to the chief sponsor of this legislation, the gentleman from California (Mr. FARR).

(Mr. FARR asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Chairman BERMAN and Rank-

ing Member ROS-LEHTINEN for their leadership and vision on this issue. I would also like to thank the Foreign Affairs Committee staff for their meticulous work. We have a better bill on the floor for it.

This legislation is important because future stabilization operations are going to rely on a different set of skills, different than we currently have. We talk about stabilization and peace building, but how exactly do you do that? That is what this bill is about.

It is a bill that allows the Secretary of State, working with the Secretary of Defense, to essentially bring the core of people that have the talent, have the linguistic talent, the knowledge talent, the experience of careers, to come together to form an emergency response team, much like we have in the domestic program with FEMA.

Even Secretary of Defense Gates has noted that future conflicts will be fundamentally political in nature and will require an application of all elements of national power, not just the Defense Department. On another occasion, Secretary Gates called for more resources to be given to our civilian agencies, so that they will have the civilian professionals capable of carrying out reconstruction and stabilization operations.

Why would the Secretary of Defense ask for more money to go to the State Department and to USAID? It is because he sees the future threats and our capacity to deal with them and understands that a safer and more secure and more peaceful world depends upon adequately funding our civilian agencies. He knows that the best way to avoid war is to stabilize countries by creating stakeholders for peace in those countries.

USAID, our foremost development agency, has the expertise, but lacks the manpower and regular training to conduct stabilization operations. With this bill, USAID will receive additional personnel to implement stabilization operations. The State Department will also be enhanced as it takes on the role of coordinator of these complex operations.

Again, I appreciate all the hard work that went into this bill to get it to the floor. I appreciate the strong backing from Secretary Gates and from Secretary Rice. I would also like to thank Congressman SAXTON, my colleague, for his stalwart support and his work on H.R. 1084. It is my earnest hope that improved American civilian capabilities will yield fewer and shorter conflicts and will build a more peaceful and prosperous world. In order to do that, I need your vote, and I ask for that for the betterment of America and the world.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to my colleague, the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. Davis).

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of

H.R. 1084. In today's security environment, it is absolutely essential that we authorize the creation of the Response Readiness Corps and Response Readiness Reserve within the State Department and USAID. This legislation is a vital step toward achieving a proper balance between civilian and military efforts in stabilization and reconstruction missions.

Iraq and Afghanistan have really highlighted a need for better inter-agency coordination and a more robust civilian capacity. As someone who went to Iraq early and saw a void of adequate civilian support, I know that we need to improve the civilian apparatus for future stability in reconstruction efforts. In Iraq and Afghanistan, we have relied on the military to act as diplomats, help build government capacity and conduct combat missions, all at the same time.

Simply put, stability and reconstruction have fallen too heavily on our military in recent years. Unable to tap into a viable, full-scale deployable civilian force, our great men and women have been asked to perform jobs outside of their area of expertise. Congress must, must do a better job of marshaling all elements of national power in support of U.S. goals abroad and ensure that future missions are not military-centric, but joint interagency efforts. Part of this effort must be greater capacity within civilian agencies, a bench to pull from when contingencies arise. This legislation by my friend from California will help do just that.

Congress must also be thinking about how to capture the skills and lessons learned from military personnel and civilians who have served on PRTs or other interagency projects in Iraq and Afghanistan. These individuals now have vital skills that could be used to help train Federal civilian employees deploying to zones of conflict.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1084 gets us on the right path, and I encourage all of my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to a gentleman who has been very interested in this whole process of capacity building, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER).

Mr. SNYDER. Mr. Speaker, people in Arkansas want to be safe and they want to feel safe. Everyone in America wants to be safe and have a strong national defense. National security means a strong military. National security also means that all the tools in our tool box must be available, including the capacity and availability of the civilian side of our government.

Mr. FARR has been leading this charge, along with Mr. SAXTON, and I appreciate the great work of Mr. BERMAN stepping into his new role, to bring forth this issue that all the tools of U.S. strength must be available. As Mrs. DAVIS was pointing out, we have a lot of work to do beyond this bill in terms of the coordination of all our different agencies.

I was talking to one of my constituents who is a civilian working in Iraq, and she said, You know, I sometimes think the differences in conflicts between the agencies of the U.S. Government are greater than the differences between us and the Iraqis. I think that really brings home the issues and challenges that we have.

But this bill today is a great step towards making sure that we have all the tools in our tool box that we need for our national security, and I applaud its passage today.

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, before I yield back my time, I would like to include for the RECORD an exchange of letters regarding H.R. 1084 between the gentleman from California, the chairman of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Mr. WAXMAN), and me.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM,

Washington, DC, March 4, 2008.

Hon. HOWARD L. BERMAN,
Acting Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs,
Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN BERMAN: I am writing to confirm our mutual understanding with respect to the consideration of H.R. 1084, the Reconstruction and Stabilization Civilian Management Act of 2008.

As you know, on February 27, 2008, the Committee on Foreign Affairs ordered H.R. 1084 reported to the House. The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Oversight Committee) appreciates your effort to consult regarding those provisions of H.R. 1084 that fall within the Oversight Committee's jurisdiction, including matters related to the federal workforce.

In the interest of expediting consideration of H.R. 1084, the Oversight Committee will not separately consider this legislation. The Oversight Committee does so, however, with the understanding that this does not prejudice the Oversight Committee's jurisdictional interests and prerogatives regarding this bill or similar legislation.

I respectfully request your support for the appointment of outside conferees from the Oversight Committee should H.R. 1084 or a similar Senate bill be considered in conference with the Senate. I also request that you include our exchange of letters on this matter in the Report by the Committee on Foreign Affairs on H.R. 1084 and in the Congressional Record during consideration of this legislation on the House floor.

Thank you for your attention to these matters.

Sincerely,

HENRY A. WAXMAN,
Chairman.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, March 4, 2008.

Hon. HENRY A. WAXMAN,
Chairman, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C.

DEAR Mr. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your letter regarding H.R. 1084, the Reconstruction and Stabilization Civilian Management Act of 2008, which authorizes the President to provide assistance to stabilize and reconstruct a country or region that is at risk of, in, or is in transition from, conflict or civil strife, and establishes a Response Readiness Corps and Civilian Reserve Corps to respond to such country or region.

I appreciate your willingness to work cooperatively on this legislation. I recognize that the bill contains provisions that fall within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. I acknowledge that the Committee will not seek a sequential referral of the bill and agree that the inaction of your Committee with respect to the bill does not prejudice the Oversight Committee's jurisdictional interests and prerogatives regarding this bill or similar legislation.

Further, as to any House-Senate conference on the bill, I understand that your Committee reserves the right to seek the appointment of conferees for consideration of portions of the bill that are within the Committee's jurisdiction, and I agree to support a request by the Committee with respect to serving as conferees on the bill (or similar legislation).

I will ensure that our exchange of letters is included in my Committee's report on the bill and in the Congressional Record during consideration on the House floor of H.R. 1084, and I look forward to working with you on this important legislation.

Cordially,

HOWARD L. BERMAN,
Acting Chairman.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of 1084, the Reconstruction and Stabilization Civilian H.R. Management Act of 2008, introduced by my distinguished colleague from California, Representative FARR.

This important legislation will amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956, and the Foreign Service Act of 1980 in order to build operational readiness for civilian agencies.

Since the end of the cold war, the United States has consistently been engaged in stabilization or reconstruction operation at the average interval of once every 18 to 24 months. However, despite the United States' ever increasing stabilization efforts around the world, U.S. Agency for International Development, USAID), the most significant diplomatic and development organ of the United States Government, has been substantially weakened due to staff cuts, hiring freezes, and consolidation. This is absolutely unacceptable.

In a time where the U.S. has mounted a global war on terror, arguably destabilizing more regions than not, it is imperative that American diplomatic missions reflect American global involvement. This important legislation authorizes the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Administrator of USAID, to establish a Response Readiness Corps to provide stabilization and reconstruction activities in foreign countries or those with expertise in engineering, agricultural development, rule of law, and civil administration required for the complex stabilization missions of today are simply not there. At a time regions that are at risk, in, or are in transition from, conflict or civil strife (up to 250 personnel to serve in the Corps, and such other personnel as the Secretary may designate from the Department and USAID).

I have said time and time again that what the United States needs is a new diplomatic offensive, a diplomatic surge. That being said, there are only 6,600 professional Foreign Service officers today in the State Department. According to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, the number of professional Foreign Service officers is less than the personnel of

one carrier battle group. In a time when the United States is engaged in two massive stabilization and reconstruction efforts and countless other emergencies, USAID has less than 1,000 Foreign Service officers, as opposed to during the height of the Cold War when there were more than 4,500 Foreign Service officers. In essence, we have created a situation where those with expertise in engineering, agricultural development, rule of law, and civil administration required for the complex stabilization missions of today are simply not there. At a time when we need to call on this expertise the most, the U.S. Government capacity for these skills is at its weakest.

This legislation seeks to alleviate some of this total lack of diplomatic and developmental capacity. The aim of this bill is to successfully address upcoming threats and prosecute the long-term fight against terror by fortifying the United States Government's civilian capacity to deal with instability, particularly in areas where terrorist and terrorism thrive. This legislation will authorize the Secretary to establish a Readiness Response Corps in order to alleviate the gap in civilian capacity. This Corps will include active, as well as standby, components composed of Federal employees. Furthermore, it includes a reserve component consisting of civilian experts from State and local governments as well as non-governmental organizations.

The current American diplomatic and developmental strategy simply does not sufficiently meet the needs of today's world. This bill will amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to authorize the President to transfer or reprogram up to \$100 million in any given fiscal year for the purposes of furnishing assistance and permitting the export of goods and services to assist in stabilizing and reconstructing a country or region that is in, or is in transition from, conflict or civil strife. It also amends the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956 in order to establish within the Department of State an absolutely essential Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization.

I strongly support this legislation that will ease the burden on the Armed Forces by allowing the State Department to deploy civilians in crisis situations previously staffed by the military. Our men and women in uniform have accomplished what we asked them to do and it is time that the U.S. Government responsibly and appropriately addresses the stabilization and reconstruction situations that persist, despite our inaction, throughout the world. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this extremely important and timely piece of legislation.

Mr. BERMAN. 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 California (Mr. BERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1084, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.