

Because this bill is sensible, responsible legislation, I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, I yield back any time we have remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6344.

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.

PRE-DISASTER MITIGATION ACT OF 2008

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6109) to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to reauthorize the pre-disaster hazard mitigation program, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6109

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 “Pre-Disaster Mitigation Act of 2008”.

SEC. 2. PRE-DISASTER HAZARD MITIGATION.

(a) ALLOCATION OF FUNDS.—Section 203(f) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5133(f)) is amended to read as follows:

“(f) ALLOCATION OF FUNDS.—

“(1) BASE AMOUNT.—The amount of financial assistance made available to a State (including amounts made available to local governments of the State) under this section for a fiscal year—

“(A) shall be not less than the lesser of—

“(i) \$575,000; or

“(ii) the amount that is equal to 1.0 percent of the total funds appropriated to carry out this section for the fiscal year; and

“(B) shall be subject to the criteria specified in subsection (g).

“(2) COMPETITIVE PROGRAM.—Other than the amounts described in paragraph (1), financial assistance made available to a State (including amounts made available to local governments of the State) under this section shall be awarded on a competitive basis subject to the criteria in subsection (g).

“(3) MAXIMUM AMOUNT.—The amount of financial assistance made available to a State (including amounts made available to local governments of the State) for a fiscal year shall not exceed 15 percent of the total amount of funds appropriated to carry out this section for the fiscal year.”.

(b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—Section 203(m) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 5133(m)) is amended to read as follows:

“(m) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section \$250,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2009, 2010, and 2011.”.

(c) REFERENCES.—Section 203 of such Act (42 U.S.C. 5133) is amended—

(1) in the section heading by striking “PREDISASTER” and inserting “PRE-DISASTER”;

(2) in the subsection heading for subsection (i) by striking “PREDISASTER” and inserting “PRE-DISASTER”;

(3) by striking “Predisaster” each place it appears and inserting “Pre-Disaster”; and

(4) by striking “predisaster” each place it appears and inserting “pre-disaster”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) and the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. DRAKE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 6109.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise and ask the House to support H.R. 6109, as amended, the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Act of 2008. I want to especially thank Chairman OBERSTAR and Ranking Member MICA, and my own subcommittee ranking member, Congressman GRAVES, for their very strong, bipartisan support of this essential bill.

H.R. 6109, the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Act of 2008, reauthorizes the Pre-Disaster Mitigation program for 3 years. The bill authorizes grants to States awarded on a competitive basis, except that each State, and this is important, each State receives a statutory minimum of \$557,000 or 1 percent of the funds appropriated, whichever is less. In this way, the bill increases the minimum amount that each State can receive under the program from \$500,000 to \$575,000 and codifies the competitive selection process of the program, as currently administered by FEMA. The bill authorizes \$250 million for each of fiscal years 2009 through 2011 for the Pre-Disaster Mitigation program.

The PDM program was first authorized in the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. The program, administered by FEMA through its Mitigation Division, is authorized under section 203 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, which we call the Stafford Act, of course. Pursuant to section 203(m) of the Stafford Act, the PDM program terminates on September 30 of this year unless Congress reauthorizes the program.

This program provides cost-effective technical and financial assistance to State and local governments, which on the basis of a study of the effects of this quite new program, we now know reduces injuries, loss of life and damage to property caused by natural disasters. It provides grants to the States, territories, tribal governments and local communities on a competitive basis.

According to the CBO, on average future losses are reduced by about \$3

measured in discounted present value for each \$1 spent on these projects, including both Federal and non-Federal spending.

Madam Speaker, this is not a program which we have lightly authorized. We learned some lessons from Katrina. We have learned lessons, I believe, Madam Speaker, this week when entire sections of our country are being ravaged by flooding.

This amount of money we do not pretend will allow pre-disaster programs to be undertaken for every event that can be expected. What it does do is to draw to the attention of local and State governments to what they and what we should be doing to reduce our own liability from particularly these natural disasters.

Whenever a disaster occurs, Madam Speaker, this Congress will do what it must do. It will step up and do what we are doing in Louisiana. We do not pretend that the worst disaster in recorded United States history could have somehow been even perhaps mitigated by these funds, but we do believe that Katrina tells the story that every bit of mitigation you do, \$3 for every \$1 invested, says CBO, saves, first of all, lives, and then, of course, saves the investment that we ourselves will be required to make, and as Americans, we can say will make, in the event of a disaster.

We all owe it to the country and to our local jurisdictions to use this money strategically and wisely so that it has the greatest effect, given the amount available.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. DRAKE. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6109, which reauthorizes the successful Pre-Disaster Mitigation program for the next 3 years. The Pre-Disaster Mitigation program was originally authorized by the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 as a pilot program to study the effectiveness of mitigation grants given to communities before disaster strikes. Prior to the creation of the Pre-Disaster Mitigation program, hazard mitigation primarily occurred after a disaster through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Every disaster costs us in damage to homes, businesses and infrastructure, and potentially in the loss of lives.

The Pre-Disaster Mitigation program prevents damage and destruction by helping communities to act proactively through projects that reduce the cost and limit the adverse impacts of future disasters.

With FEMA's assistance, local governments identify cost-effective mitigation projects, which are awarded on a competitive basis. Since its inception, mitigation programs have helped local communities save lives and reduce property damage through a wide range of mitigation projects, such as home elevations, buyouts, improved shelters and warning systems.

In 2005, the National Institute of Building Sciences issued a study that conclusively demonstrated Federal mitigation programs saved the Federal Government money. Specifically, the study found that for every dollar spent on mitigation, the American taxpayer saves over \$3 in Federal disaster payments.

Mitigation projects also are intended to save lives, and this year's record tornado season underscores the importance of lifesaving warning sirens. Given the tremendous destructive power of tornadoes, you can't mitigate against property damage, but you can mitigate the loss of life with a warning system. I particularly want to thank Chairwoman NORTON for including report language clarifying that Congress intended tornado warning sirens to be funded in this program.

At this point I would like to read a paragraph from the committee report on this subject:

"The Committee notes the clear purpose of the Pre-Disaster Mitigation program to reduce injuries, loss of life, and damage to property from natural disasters and the program's broad statutory authority to provide Federal assistance for projects, such as tornado warning sirens, which serve this purpose. Given the sudden nature and extreme destructive power of tornadoes, the Committee believes warning sirens are a cost-effective measure for mitigating injuries and loss of life from tornadoes. The Committee believes that Section 203 of the Stafford Act clearly authorizes mitigation assistance for tornado warning sirens."

I believe this language makes it perfectly clear that Congress intended tornado warning sirens to be an eligible project under the Pre-Disaster Mitigation program and Congress expects the Federal Emergency Management Agency to administer the program accordingly.

In conclusion, mitigation works. It saves lives, limits future damage, and reduces Federal disaster costs. The Pre-Disaster Mitigation program is a worthy program, and I look forward to working with Chairwoman NORTON to reauthorize it this year.

I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1600

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, it is a special pleasure and honor to introduce the Chair of the full committee whose knowledge and work long before this bill finally came forward in the form of an actual bill has been seminal to the act before us today, the chairman of the full committee, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR).

Mr. OBERSTAR. I thank the gentlewoman for yielding. And I want to compliment Chairwoman Norton for the splendid work she has done chairing the subcommittee, holding hours of hearings on the Pre-Disaster Mitigation program and on various as-

pects of FEMA's programs that have unfolded in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. She has rendered enormous service to the country, to the people of flood prone, disaster prone areas of the country through these hearings and done a superb job. And to Mr. GRAVES, the ranking member of the subcommittee, and Mr. MICA who has fully participated in the shaping of this legislation. It is truly a bipartisan initiative, but one that goes back a very long time.

It was in 1988, then the Committee on Public Works and Transportation authorized FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Program. We thought then this was a very important initiative to provide grants to communities so that they could put in place initiatives, whether structures or nonstructural approaches to protecting communities and individuals, businesses, residences against the hazards of flood, tornado, hurricane and, in our northern tier, excessive snowfall.

The idea was to build better after a disaster and be better prepared for the next time around. But that idea evolved over time, and it was in the mid 1990s that then James Lee Witt, the administrator of FEMA, conceived the idea of taking hazard mitigation a step further to pre-disaster mitigation. He called it Project Impact.

He came up to the committee, now the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, to meet with then Chairman Bud Shuster and me as the ranking member to discuss Project Impact, saying that we can save money, as the gentlewoman, the minority leader for this afternoon, has indicated, that we can save money by protecting against what we know will be hazards, disasters happening in the future. And so the committee crafted in 2000 the Pre-Disaster Mitigation program in our FEMA disaster Hazard Mitigation Program.

Out of that program was allocated to the City of Seattle \$50 million to strengthen structures in the city against the possibility of earthquake. The city invested some \$50 million in strengthening public structures, public buildings, public roadways, and private structures as well. And then they had an earthquake. After the effects of the earthquake had been analyzed, FEMA estimated that the Pre-Disaster Mitigation investments saved \$500 million in what would have been damaged public and private structures alike, tenfold the value of the investment.

The program then was further extended as the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure continued its work. I remember subsequent Chairman Don Young saying so often: Yes, we have to be prepared. FEMA is in the Department of Homeland Security and has to be part of protecting against the security threat to the United States. We don't know when it will come. We know that we have to be prepared. But we do know that every year, said Chairman Young, there are going to be

hurricanes, there is going to be a flood, there is going to be whiteouts, there is going to be an earthquake, and we need to continue this program. So with bipartisan support, we have extended the program.

In the aftermath, one of the best examples was the town of Valmeyer, Illinois, devastated in the 1993 Mississippi River flood. For \$45 million in Federal, State, and local funding and Pre-Disaster Mitigation, the town was simply relocated to bluffs 400 feet above the site of the former town. This year, as the Mississippi overflowed its banks in many places along its course from southern Minnesota through Iowa, the Chicago Tribune ran a story entitled, "Valmeyer, Illinois, Soaked in '93, Town Now High and Dry." Quoting a resident, Eleanor Anderson, 86 years old, home destroyed in the 1993 flood, said, "I am sure glad I don't have to worry now that we are high enough here on the hill." That is a reasonable investment of public funds.

Story County, Iowa, in 1990, 1993 and 1996, homes were flooded out. Finally, in 1996, with Pre-Disaster Mitigation Funds, those six homes were bought out and moved out. And in 1998 when the floods struck, FEMA estimated that the Federal and State and local governments saved \$541,900 in what would have been damages to restore those homes.

In my own district, in 1999, on the eve of July 4, on July 3, straight-line winds called a derecho of 100 miles an hour in a swath 15 miles wide swept through the Superior National Forest, the Boundary Waters Canoe area on the U.S.-Canadian border, and blew down 26 million trees, 3 years' worth of timber harvest for the whole State of Minnesota, creating an enormous hazard for fire to local residents. In the area outside of the wilderness, trees had to be subjected to salvage logging to clear out a way from homes, from resorts, and from outfitter buildings.

Following up, FEMA came to the area and said, with Pre-Disaster Mitigation funds, we propose a 75/25 participation to install sprinkler systems around all the homes and all the businesses in the Gunflint Trail area to protect against the potential, the very real potential of future fire. Almost every resident and business participated in the program, and about 96 percent of the people maintained their sprinkler systems. Then last year, in April of 2007, a fire broke out. Careless campers left the site of their camping and a wind came up and blew it into what eventually became a 75,000 acre fire. The homes that had the sprinkler systems, the buildings that were protected with the sprinkler systems were unscathed. Those that weren't, 147 of them, burned.

Pre-Disaster Mitigation saves lives, saves property, saves costs. It is a sound investment in the future. We have authorized in this legislation the program for an additional 3 years at \$250 million each for fiscal 2009 through

2011. The chair of the subcommittee, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) has outlined all of the specifics of the bill; I need not go into them.

I simply speak to reinforce the specific examples the benefits of the Pre-Disaster Mitigation program. It is a sound investment in the future of this country for all of us as we are subjected to increasing amounts of disaster from natural causes.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. DAVIS of California). 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. 6109, 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.

OLD POST OFFICE BUILDING REDEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2008

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5001) to authorize the Administrator of General Services to provide for the redevelopment of the Old Post Office Building located in the District of Columbia, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5001

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 "Old Post Office Building Redevelopment Act of 2008".

SEC. 2. OLD POST OFFICE BUILDING DEFINED.

In this Act, the term "Old Post Office Building" means the land, including any improvements thereon and specifically including the Pavilion Annex, that is located at 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW., in the District of Columbia, and under the jurisdiction, custody, and control of the General Services Administration.

SEC. 3. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) For almost a decade the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives has expressed considerable concern about the waste and neglect of the valuable, historic Old Post Office Building, centrally located in the heart of the Nation's Capital on Pennsylvania Avenue, and has pressed the General Services Administration to develop and fully use this building.

(2) The policy of the Government long has been to preserve and make usable historic properties rather than sell them for revenue.

(3) Security concerns related to this property's proximity to the White House may hinder the sale of the Old Post Office Building to a private party.

(4) On December 28, 2000, the General Services Administration, pursuant to Public Law 105-277, submitted to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committees on Appropriations and Environment and Public Works of the

Senate a plan for the comprehensive redevelopment of the Old Post Office.

(5) The Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure approved the redevelopment plan on May 16, 2001, and the Committees on Appropriations and Environment and Public Works approved the plan on June 15, 2001.

(6) The General Services Administration issued a Request for Expression of Interest in 2004 for developing the Old Post Office Building that generated a healthy, private sector interest, but the General Services Administration has failed to proceed with implementation of the approved redevelopment plan.

(7) Redevelopment of the Old Post Office Building will preserve the historic integrity of this unique and important asset, put it to its highest and best use, and provide a lucrative financial return to the Government.

SEC. 4. REDEVELOPMENT OF OLD POST OFFICE BUILDING.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator of General Services is directed to proceed with redevelopment of the Old Post Office Building, in accordance with existing authorities available to the Administrator and consistent with the redevelopment plan previously approved by the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committees on Appropriations and Environment and Public Works of the Senate.

(b) RELOCATION OF EXISTING BUILDING TENANTS.—The Administrator is authorized, notwithstanding section 3307 of title 40, United States Code, and otherwise in accordance with existing authorities available to the Administrator, to provide replacement space for Federal agency tenants housed in the Old Post Office Building whose relocation is necessary for redevelopment of the Building.

SEC. 5. REPORTING REQUIREMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator of General Services shall transmit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the Senate a report on any proposed redevelopment agreement related to the Old Post Office Building.

(b) CONTENTS.—A report transmitted under this section shall include a summary of a cost-benefit analysis of the proposed development agreement and a description of the material provisions of the proposed agreement.

(c) REVIEW BY CONGRESS.—Any proposed development agreement related to the Old Post Office Building may not become effective until the end of a 30-day period of continuous session of Congress following the date of the transmittal of the report required under this section. For purposes of the preceding sentence, continuity of a session of Congress is broken only by an adjournment sine die, and there shall be excluded from the computation of such 30-day period any day during which either House of Congress is not in session during an adjournment of more than 3 days to a day certain.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) and the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. DRAKE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 5001.

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

There was no objection.

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

I am pleased to rise in support of H.R. 5001, as amended, and to ask for the support of the House, a bill to direct the General Services Administration to redevelop the Old Post Office located on Pennsylvania Avenue, right in the center of the District of Columbia.

On January 16, 2008, I introduced H.R. 5001, the Old Post Office Development Act, to redevelop the nearly empty Old Post Office, a unique historic treasure which was once the post office of the Nation's capital located at 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest, owned by the Federal Government's GSA.

For more than ten years, our Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management has expressed continuing and mounting concern about the neglect and underutilization of this invaluable government site, and has pressed the GSA to develop and use this building to its full potential.

Madam Speaker, when I brought this bill to the full committee, Mr. OBERSTAR from whom we just heard on a prior bill and Ranking Member MICA lead what could only be called a round of hoorahs and hosannas that this bill was being brought forward.

More than 20 million visitors come. This building is so strategically placed that it is almost certain that constituents of Members have ventured into this extraordinary building which looks like just the kind of building that invites people on the outside, and then they come on the inside and they can't believe what they see. So the building is well known not only by our subcommittee but by the full committee. Worse, as I shall relate, is why it has not been brought forward.

The Old Post Office Building was completed in 1899. That makes it one of the oldest buildings here, and is certainly one of the oldest, perhaps the oldest, for which rehabilitation and preservation has not somehow begun or envisioned. This grand example of Romanesque revival occupies an entire city block. Because it was the main post office, it was strategically located for a purpose not as an historic building, but in the 19th century when that is how you built post offices.

The building was placed on the Historic Register in 1973, and remains one of the city's most unusual, interesting, and appealing landmarks. Part of the appeal of the Old Post Office Building also is its central location in the Federal Triangle, its proximity to many Federal historic sites not the least of them the White House which is a stone's throw from the Old Post Office. Our major metro lines converge there, and a host of restaurants and other amenities surround this location's major tourist site.

□ 1615

This bill is important for the city I represent, as well, but its importance