

have a series of records that have been given to us by the Republican leadership, only they are the wrong kinds of records.

We have record debt that is galloping towards \$9 trillion. Each and every American owes over \$30,000 to this debt. We have the largest trade deficit in the history of this country, over \$900 billion, and we have the largest deficit in the history of this country. We have lost more jobs in the first half of this year than have been lost since the Great Depression, and if we continue at this rate, we will lose over 1 million jobs in this year.

Now, that is the record of the Republican leadership. But what is before us is a very important bill, one that I support, one that I urge my colleagues to support. And I urge my colleagues to support consideration of H.R. 6184, and I hope that we will have a bipartisan commitment to passing this legislation.

Mr. KING of New York. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of America's Beautiful National Parks Quarter Dollar Coin Act (H.R. 6184) introduced by the Gentleman from Delaware. It's a good bill and a good follow-up to his 50-State quarter bill we have all enjoyed. However, Madam Speaker, I would like to make a point in the process of supporting this bill.

The idea of following the State quarters by honoring national parks is a very good idea, and I salute Mr. CASTLE and his co-sponsors, Mrs. MALONEY and Mr. GUTIERREZ. I even want to suggest a place in my district as the one for the back of the New York quarter—the Sagamore Hill National Historic Site, the beautiful summer home of former President Theodore Roosevelt, in Oyster Bay.

But that brings me to the point I'd like to make Mr. Speaker. Teddy Roosevelt, as the bill itself notes, is known as the first great champion of the country's National Parks, and in my view, the front of this new coin should bear the image of Teddy Roosevelt.

I, of course, mean no disrespect to George Washington. He was the Father of our Country, and his image has appropriately been on the one-dollar bill and the quarter. But I think, as a recent editorial in *Coin World* magazine pointed out, that it's about time we honor Teddy Roosevelt by placing his image on U.S. currency—after all, he's the only one of our four great Presidents honored on Mount Rushmore, who does not appear on a U.S. coin or banknote.

Mr. Speaker, I do not mean to criticize this legislation, and I intend to vote for it enthusiastically. But I hope all Members will think about the fact that without Teddy Roosevelt's championing of the ideas of conservation and National Parks, we would still have national parks, but the commitment to them would not have been as great, or so early. So, I hope the sponsors of this bill will work with me to help find a place somewhere in the U.S.

system of money for the image of the great Rough Rider on a coin or banknote.

With that I urge adoption of the bill. Mrs. MALONEY of New York. 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 New York (Mrs. MALONEY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6184.

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. CASTLE. 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.

FEDERAL LAND ASSISTANCE, MANAGEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT ACT

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5541) to provide a supplemental funding source for catastrophic emergency wildland fire suppression activities on Department of the Interior and National Forest System lands, to require the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to develop a cohesive wildland fire management strategy, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5541

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 "Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement Act" or "FLAME Act".

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

- Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
- Sec. 2. Flame Fund for catastrophic emergency wildland fire suppression activities.
- Sec. 3. Cohesive wildland fire management strategy.
- Sec. 4. Review of certain wildfires to evaluate cost containment in wildland fire suppression activities.
- Sec. 5. Reducing risk of wildfires in fire-ready communities.

SEC. 2. FLAME FUND FOR CATASTROPHIC EMERGENCY WILDLAND FIRE SUPPRESSION ACTIVITIES.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) FEDERAL LAND.—The term "Federal land" means the following:

(A) Public lands, as defined in section 103 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1702).

(B) Units of the National Park System.

(C) Refuges of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

(D) Lands held in trust by the United States for the benefit of Indian tribes or individual Indians.

(E) Lands in the National Forest System, as defined in section 11(a) of the Forest and

Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (16 U.S.C. 1609(a)).

(2) FLAME FUND.—The term "Flame Fund" means the Federal Land Assistance, Management, and Enhancement Fund established by this section.

(3) SECRETARY CONCERNED.—The term "Secretary concerned" means—

(A) the Secretary of the Interior, with respect to Federal land described in subparagraphs (A), (B), (C), and (D) of paragraph (1); and

(B) the Secretary of Agriculture, with respect to National Forest System land.

(4) SECRETARIES.—The term "Secretaries" means the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture, acting jointly.

(b) ESTABLISHMENT AND AVAILABILITY OF FLAME FUND.—

(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established in the Treasury of the United States a fund to be known as the Federal Land Assistance, Management, and Enhancement Fund.

(2) CONTENTS.—The Flame Fund shall consist of the following amounts:

(A) Amounts appropriated to the Flame Fund pursuant to the authorization of appropriations in subsection (c).

(B) Amounts transferred to the Flame Fund pursuant to subsection (d).

(3) AVAILABILITY.—Subject to subsection (e), amounts in the Flame Fund shall be available to the Secretaries to pay the costs of catastrophic emergency wildland fire suppression activities that are separate from amounts annually appropriated to the Secretaries for the predicted annual workload for wildland fire suppression activities, based on analyses of historical workloads and anticipated increased workloads due to changing environmental or demographic conditions.

(c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

(1) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Flame Fund such funds as may be necessary to carry out this section. It is the intent of Congress that the amount appropriated to the Flame Fund for fiscal year 2009 and each subsequent fiscal year equal the average amount expended by the Secretaries for emergency wildland fire suppression activities over the five fiscal years preceding that fiscal year.

(2) SENSE OF CONGRESS ON DESIGNATION OF CERTAIN APPROPRIATIONS AS EMERGENCY REQUIREMENT.—It is the sense of Congress that the amounts appropriated to the Flame Fund that are above the average of the obligations of the preceding 10 years for wildland fire suppression in the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior, adjusted for inflation, should be designated as amounts necessary to meet emergency needs, and the new budget authority and outlays resulting therefrom should not count for the purposes of titles III and IV of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

(3) NOTICE OF INSUFFICIENT FUNDS.—The Secretaries shall notify the congressional committees specified in subsection (h)(2) whenever only an estimated two months worth of funding remains in the Flame Fund.

(d) TRANSFER OF EXCESS WILDLAND FIRE SUPPRESSION AMOUNTS INTO FLAME FUND.—At the end of each fiscal year, the Secretary concerned shall transfer to the Flame Fund amounts appropriated to the Secretary concerned for wildland fire suppression activities for the fiscal year, but not obligated for wildland fire suppression activities before the end of the fiscal year.

(e) USE OF FLAME FUND.—

(1) DECLARATION REQUIRED.—Amounts in the Flame Fund shall be made available to the Secretary concerned only after the Secretaries issue a declaration that a wildland fire suppression activity is eligible for funding through the Flame Fund.

(2) **DECLARATION CRITERIA.**—A declaration by the Secretaries under paragraph (1) shall be based on the following criteria:

(A) In the case of an individual wildland fire incident—

- (i) the fire covers 300 or more acres;
- (ii) the severity of the fire, which may be based on incident complexity or the potential for increased complexity; and
- (iii) the threat posed by the fire, including the potential for loss of lives, property, or critical resources.

(B) Consistent with subsection (f), in the case of a firefighting season, cumulative wildland fire suppression activities, when the costs of those activities for the Secretary concerned are projected to exceed amounts annually appropriated.

(3) **TRANSFER OF AMOUNTS TO SECRETARY CONCERNED.**—After issuance of a declaration under paragraph (1) and upon the request of the Secretary concerned, the Secretary of the Treasury shall transfer from the Flame Fund to the Secretary concerned such amounts as the Secretaries determine are necessary for wildland fire suppression activities associated with the declared suppression emergency.

(4) **STATE, PRIVATE, AND TRIBAL LAND.**—Use of the Flame Fund for catastrophic emergency wildland fire suppression activities on State and private land and, where applicable, tribal land shall be consistent with existing agreements where the Secretaries have agreed to assume responsibility for wildland fire suppression activities on the land.

(f) **TREATMENT OF ANTICIPATED AND PREDICTED ACTIVITIES.**—The Secretary concerned shall continue to fund anticipated and predicted wildland fire suppression activities within the appropriate agency budget for each fiscal year. Use of the additional funding made available through the Flame Fund is intended to supplement the budgeted and appropriated agency funding and is to be used only for purposes and in instances consistent with this section.

(g) **PROHIBITION ON OTHER TRANSFERS.**—All amounts in the Flame Fund, as well as all funds appropriated for the purpose of wildland fire suppression on Federal land, must be obligated before the Secretary concerned may transfer funds from non-fire accounts for wildland fire suppression.

(h) **ACCOUNTING AND REPORTS.**—

(1) **ACCOUNTING AND REPORTING SYSTEM.**—The Secretaries shall establish an accounting and reporting system for the Flame Fund compatible with existing National Fire Plan reporting procedures.

(2) **ANNUAL REPORT.**—The Secretaries shall submit to the Committee on Natural Resources, the Committee on Agriculture, and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, the Committee on Indian Affairs, and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate an annual report on the use of the funds from the Flame Fund, together with any recommendations that the Secretaries may have to improve the administrative control and oversight of the Flame Fund.

(3) **PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.**—The annual report required by paragraph (2) shall be made available to the public.

SEC. 3. COHESIVE WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY.

(a) **STRATEGY REQUIRED.**—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture shall submit to Congress a report that contains a cohesive wildland fire management strategy, consistent with the recommendations contained in recent Comptroller General reports regarding this issue.

(b) **ELEMENTS OF STRATEGY.**—The strategy required by subsection (a) shall address the

findings of the Comptroller General in the reports referred to in such subsection and include the following elements:

(1) A system to identify the most cost effective means for allocating fire management budget resources.

(2) An illustration of plans by the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to reinvest in non-fire programs.

(3) A description of how the Secretaries will employ appropriate management response.

(4) A system for assessing the level of risk to communities.

(5) A system to ensure that the highest priority fuels reduction projects are being funded first.

(c) **NOTICE OF PRESCRIBED FIRES.**—As part of the strategy required by subsection (a) for the Forest Service, the Secretary of Agriculture shall ensure that, before any prescribed fire is used on National Forest System land, owners of adjacent private land are notified in writing of the date and scope of the proposed prescribed fire.

SEC. 4. REVIEW OF CERTAIN WILDFIRES TO EVALUATE COST CONTAINMENT IN WILDLAND FIRE SUPPRESSION ACTIVITIES.

(a) **REVIEW REQUIRED.**—The Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture shall conduct a review, using independent panels, of each wildfire incident for which the Secretary concerned incurs expenses in excess of \$10,000,000.

(b) **REPORT.**—The Secretary concerned shall submit to the Committee on Natural Resources, the Committee on Agriculture, and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, the Committee on Indian Affairs, and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate a report containing the results of each review conducted under subsection (a).

SEC. 5. REDUCING RISK OF WILDFIRES IN FIRE-READY COMMUNITIES.

(a) **FIRE-READY COMMUNITY DEFINED.**—In this section, the term “fire-ready community” means a community that—

(1) is located within a priority area identified pursuant to subsection (b);

(2) has a cooperative fire agreement that articulates the roles and responsibilities for Federal, State and local government entities in local wildfire suppression and protection;

(3) has local codes that require fire-resistant home design and building materials;

(4) has a community wildfire protection plan (as defined in section 101 of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6502)); and

(5) is engaged in a successful collaborative process that includes multiple interested persons representing diverse interests and is transparent and nonexclusive, such as a resource advisory committee established under section 205 of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-393; 16 U.S.C. 500 note).

(b) **FIRE RISK MAPPING.**—As soon as is practicable after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior (in this section referred to as the “Secretaries”) shall develop regional maps of communities most at risk of wildfire and in need of hazardous fuel treatment and maintenance. The maps shall identify priority areas for hazardous fuels reduction projects, including—

(1) at-risk communities in fire-prone areas of the wildland-urban interface (as defined in section 101 of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6502));

(2) watersheds and municipal drinking water sources;

(3) emergency evacuation corridors;

(4) electricity transmission corridors; and

(5) low-capacity or low-income communities.

(c) **LOCAL WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING CAPABILITY GRANTS.**—

(1) **GRANTS AVAILABLE.**—The Secretaries may provide cost-share grants to fire-ready communities to assist such communities in carrying activities authorized by paragraph (2).

(2) **ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES.**—Grant funds may be used for the following:

(A) Education programs to raise awareness of homeowners and citizens about wildland fire protection practices, including FireWise or similar programs.

(B) Training programs for local firefighters on wildland firefighting techniques and approaches.

(C) Equipment acquisition to facilitate wildland fire preparedness.

(D) Implementation of a community wild-fire protection plan.

(d) **WILDLAND FIRE COST-SHARE AGREEMENTS.**—In developing any wildland fire cost-share agreement with a State Forester or equivalent official, the Secretaries shall, to the greatest extent possible, encourage the State and local communities involved to become fire-ready communities.

(e) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretaries to carry out this section such sums as may be necessary.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. RAHALL) and the gentleman from Idaho (Mr. SALI) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from West Virginia.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, this year's fire season in California started in unprecedented fashion, when 1,700 fires erupted in a 48-hour period beginning June 21. Already, just over 3 weeks later, fires have burned more than 960 square miles in California.

And as of yesterday afternoon, 330 fires were still actively burning there, when citizens received the ominous warning that conditions are right for, as the National Weather Service described it, “explosive fire growth.”

Our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Big Sur, Santa Barbara County, and other areas up and down the coast, who are experiencing devastating wildfires as we speak.

Those California fires are only the most recent example of the dramatic and tragic expansion of our Nation's wildland fire season. For the last decade, the United States has experienced a growth in the destructive nature of fire seasons that have taken American lives, eliminated homes and businesses, and scorched thousands of acres of our treasured public lands.

And this is not only occurring in the West. I well recall several years ago when the New River Gorge in my home State of West Virginia was burning. I had the honor to meet with Federal firefighters who flew in from across the country to battle the blazes.

Indeed, the Federal Government has, time and time again, answered the call and mobilized legions of brave firefighters to beat back the flames and protect our lands and our communities.

But as a result, the government has also dramatically shifted spending priorities, rapidly increasing funding for fire fighting, while axing moneys for other necessary programs. And ironically, some of those programs that have been gutted were created to actually prevent fires.

There is little reason to hope that fire seasons for the foreseeable future will be any less catastrophic than those of the last decade. The trend has certainly been working toward more destruction. Knowing that, we must be better prepared.

The FLAME Act, which my colleagues Mr. RAÚL GRIJALVA, Mr. NORM DICKS and myself introduced, is an effort to correct course, to get out in front at the start of these fire seasons.

The bill has received broad, bipartisan support from 56 Members of Congress, including the ranking member of our Natural Resources Committee, Mr. YOUNG.

As well, it enjoys the support of the five former Chiefs of the Forest Service, the National Association of State Foresters, the National Association of Counties, the National Federation of Federal Employees, the Western Governors' Association, and nearly 40 other organizations.

Within the Forest Service, wildland fire activities now account for approximately 48 percent of the agency's budget, causing the Service to cut back on other important programs to cover the escalating costs of fire suppression.

The FLAME Act would help to address that funding problem, as well as the funding issues faced by other Federal agencies that are contributing funds from their limited accounts to fight these fires.

The Act would establish a dedicated Federal fund for catastrophic, emergency wildland fire suppression activities, separate from appropriated agency fire fighting funding.

The bill would also require the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior to present to Congress a long-overdue, comprehensive strategy for combating wildland fire, a strategy that would address the troubling shortcomings in the agencies' response to fires as identified by the Government Accountability Office and the Agriculture Department's Inspector General.

I cannot overstate the importance of today's action on the FLAME Act. Without a doubt, this is one of the most serious issues facing our Federal land management agencies, and it is

one that, if not addressed properly and appropriately, will continue to cost homes, businesses, communities, public lands, and American lives.

The FLAME Act will allow the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior to respond to these dangerous fires while also accomplishing other important aspects of their missions, including those that will prevent fires from devastating our communities in the future.

I ask my colleagues to support passage of the FLAME Act.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SALI. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Fire season is here and wildlands are in flames across the Nation as we speak. California is currently reporting 24 large fires, and along with California, there are large wildland fires burning in Arizona, Oregon, Washington, Virginia, and North Carolina.

Since January of this year, some 46,113 wildland fires have burned more than 2.71 million acres, destroying more than 461 residences, 15 commercial buildings, and 979 outbuildings. But it's not just property, homes, community, watersheds or livelihoods that are at stake when a wildland fire burns. Lives are also in danger, and since January of this year alone, eight firefighters have died while on duty to fight wildland fires.

For many areas of the country, the wildland fire season is just beginning.

This is an issue that I have familiarity with, as each year in Idaho the skies fill with smoke from fires. Last year alone, more than 2 million acres burned in Idaho, threatening lives, homes, and communities.

I commend the gentleman from West Virginia, my chairman, on his initiative to move a bill and bring this critical issue before the House of Representatives today. Real solutions to these deadly and growing wildfires must be found, and I appreciate his efforts to this end.

Regrettably, the bill before us today will not do enough to address the raging wildfires across this country. Communities, homes, and lives will remain at risk from wildland fires.

There is no question that there are budget issues that must be addressed. We require the Forest Service to fight these fires, while we have handcuffed that agency at the same time, whether through its budget or with forest management practices.

Over and over again on this floor, we have had discussions of how to pay for the measures that are passed by this body. And yet, the Forest Service used to provide a source of revenue. It used to manage Federal lands, selling the harvested timber and thereby bringing in revenue.

Today, in most areas, active harvesting and forest management is nonexistent on Federal lands. This has had a twofold effect. There's less and less money generated by the Forest Service, while there are also ever-growing fuel loads on federally managed lands.

I agree that we cannot expect an agency to budget for the very large wildland fires that we have seen develop over the last 6 or 7 years. To do that is something like asking an American family not only to budget for ordinary and foreseeable expenses, like dental care, health care and car repairs, but also to budget for a serious car accident or tragic health crisis that would eat up 50 percent of their entire budget for the year.

Yet that is the point we have reached with the Forest Service. Today, roughly 48 percent of the Forest Service's budget is dedicated to wildland fires, but we still expect the Service to be able to budget for these fires.

We agree there is a problem with the funding. Unfortunately, this bill doesn't fix that problem. While well-intended, this bill fails to correct the 10-year funding average problem we currently face. Even if it did, merely erasing and rewriting lines in a ledger book does nothing to fix the crisis on the ground in federally managed lands. Moving money to different accounts will not solve the problem.

While well-intentioned, unfortunately the bill before us today fails to address the more critical issue, forest management. The greatest obstacle our public land managers face in preventing catastrophic wildfires isn't dollars, it is having the ability to overcome mountains of red tape and lawsuits filed by extremists. The laws that Congress has created in an attempt to save our forests have now become the biggest obstacles to saving them from wildfires.

Congress should not be addressing funding for suppressing these large fires without addressing the cause of these large fires as well, the increasing and unchecked fuel loads in our national forests that surround or are adjacent to homes and communities.

The critical link between pre-fire forest management and fire fighting was illustrated at the hearing we had on this bill in the Natural Resources Committee in April.

During that hearing, Arizona Governor Jane Napolitano, a Democrat, testified that the 2006 woody fire near Flagstaff, Arizona, was halted before it reached 100 acres because of the hazardous fuels treatment that had been done in that area. And according to Governor Napolitano, those treatments dramatically minimized the fire's devastation.

Similarly, during that hearing our colleague NORM DICKS testified about the large fuel loads that continue to accumulate in Federal forests.

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He pointed out that the larger fires have resulted from increasing tree density and fuel loads.

We will continue to have larger and larger fires until we reduce fuel-loading. Until we provide the tools for pre-fire forest management to reduce fuel-loading, the western United States will

continue to see homes burn, watersheds destroyed, and even lives lost. We must provide the tools to preempt these devastating fires, the kind of preemption pointed to by Governor Napolitano that protected so many people and homes in the 2006 Woody Fire near Flagstaff.

Last year, during the Poe Cabin fire in Idaho, in one area the fire moved some three miles in a mere 20 minutes. In that area, several homes that had defensible space around them due to fuel reductions on private land survived the fire, while other structures in that area without defensible space did not survive.

One of these homeowners was able to get his wife out while he stayed just a bit longer to finish loading his truck. However, because of the fast-moving and intense fire combined with the heavy fuel-loading on Federal ground, he became trapped by the fire and was unable to leave. While this could have quickly become a tragic story, this man lived and his home survived thanks to the fuel reduction that had been done around his home.

While this was a result of the fuel reduction done wholly on private ground, many communities and individuals abutting these forests do not have the luxury of enough land to adequately protect the communities, watersheds, homes and lives. Providing the tools to these communities to protect their homes, livelihoods and very lives from these devastating fires is something we can and must do when addressing long-term funding to suppress the fires. We should be discussing solutions like the one I proposed, H.R. 4245, to provide the agencies with one more tool to reduce hazardous fuel loads around communities and homes.

In the great State of Idaho, many communities have put the time and energy into developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans, but implementation of many of these plans has been significantly delayed in large part because of the NEPA process. These CWPPs, as my colleagues know, are cooperative plans, requiring community collaboration and input in the formation of the plan. By delaying treatment for the safety of communities through unbelievable red tape, we subject these communities to be threatened by large wildfires.

Mr. Speaker, this is not only a bipartisan issue, this is a nonpartisan issue. It's about public safety and sound forest management that will benefit millions of Americans. My bill, which I would urge this body to take up as it addresses these wildland fires, would provide for a categorical exclusion from the NEPA process to provide another tool for timely treatments to protect these communities from large and devastating fires and preserve our pristine national forests. Too many homes have burned and too many lives have already been lost. We must provide real tools for firefighting.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California, an individual who has some firsthand experience with these fires, Mr. SAM FARR.

Mr. FARR. I thank Chairman RAHALL for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the FLAME Act. I rise in support of the act with background experience of having been a seasonal firefighter for the U.S. Department of Forestry when I was a young college student. And I rise with the experience of being on the base and complex fire in Big Sur many times last week.

What I have learned from my experience throughout my life is that what we have done in responding to fires has been the best organizational structure in government. The whole incident command structure is now being used—it started in a California fire, and being used all over the United States and the rest of the world for how we should manage emergency incidents like fires; in fact, our whole structure within homeland security, which is essentially a lot of money that we spent to bring to one stop so that we can bring the resources necessary for prevention and response.

The one area, though, that has never been addressed has actually been in the area where we have to respond year after year after year, which is wildland fires. Last year, the U.S. Forest Service spent \$1 billion on fires. And essentially that spending is an emergency process. And what happens at the end of the year is, when you want to say, okay, now it has stopped, the fire season, we have some time, let's go and do some prevention, let's do some control burns and do things like that, and we have no money to do it. And what this great bill does is it sets up a special fund that essentially recognizes that we need to have that emergency money there available to respond to emergencies.

And I would just like to say that in California we have really changed the nature of our whole State through our fire experiences. And we have changed the Department of Forestry in California.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman from California has expired.

Mr. RAHALL. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. FARR. What this bill does is now, for the first time, to bring the Federal Government together and say let's do the same thing we've done with homeland security; let's have one stop, let's have fire planning; let's have prevention, and let's have the ability to respond. This is a great bill.

Mr. SALI. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WALDEN).

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today in support of this legislation and feel that it's a good first step. Unfortunately, it doesn't do quite what it was supposed

to do, which was to really wall this off as emergency funding and address the problem. But it does authorize the money. It does set up a separate budget account.

Today in the Forest Service they spend 47 percent of their budget fighting fire. And for many years I've argued on this floor that what happens is we get the fire season, the Forest Service runs out of money, so then they rob from all the accounts where they had the projects in place to do the thinning to reduce the threat of fire for the next year. And then time runs out in the season, they can't do those projects, and we get fire. And then we restore the money as a Congress, and we repeat the cycle.

And today in America there are tens of millions, if not hundreds, of acres of Federal forest land that are subject to catastrophic fire, disease and bug infestation. If you're concerned about global warming and think carbon additions to the atmosphere are the problem, then you need to know that every year 290 million metric tons of carbon dioxide go into our atmosphere from forest fires. That's the equivalent of 4 to 6 percent of the Nation's carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuel burning.

This portrait here is a picture of Judge Steve Grasty, a Democrat in my district, his grandkids. And they're standing out in the Egley fire after it occurred in Harney Country. This fire burned well over 100,000 acres in an area that obviously needed thinning and hadn't been thinned.

And that's part of what brings me to the floor today, not only to support this bill—because I think it makes sense to have a separate firefighting budget, I think it makes sense to identify the most highest risk areas that need the treatment and to go in and treat them and to help the communities with grants and the things that are in this bill—but we need to do more than that because we should have learned the lesson that a treated forest is a healthier forest.

When we collectively passed the Healthy Forest Restoration Act and signed into law by President Bush in 2003, the Forest Service began to have the tools to expedite the treatments in the wildland urban interface. And the collaborative process my colleague from Idaho talked about that brought together the Community Wildfire Protection Planning Program allowed them to go outside the 1.5 mile around the community, and the community decided what needed to be treated.

The problem in my region, region six in the northwest, the great forest of America, is that most of the fires—over 1,400 of them in 2007—started up in the ridge lines and deep in the forest. Only a dozen or two dozen started right around the wildland urban interface.

The foresters who are the trained scientists that deal with fire environment tell me they need to take that Healthy Forest Restoration authority we gave them as a Congress in a bipartisan way

and expand it out into the Condition Class 2 and 3 lands, the lands determined by the scientists to be most out of whack with balance in nature, to go in and do the thinning. And we know where that occurs, fire behaves differently. And you all from California know very clearly, this is the kind of fire you have today, it sweeps through these areas that are overstocked, bug-infested, disease-ridden, dried out and can't handle fire. This is the same area of that fire, the Squire's Peak Fire, that had been treated.

This area that's burning is the area they hadn't treated yet. This is the difference. Look at the green growth here. The fire went through under the brush that had been treated, and it's fine. This picture, by the way, was shot by the last guy doing treatment as they drove away from the fire. They were out doing the treatment, and then they turned into firefighters and he shot that out of the back of his rig.

So I think we need to move forward with different legislation. This is good legislation: Pass it; get it over to the Senate; declare it an emergency; do this funding piece. But we need to do more. If you want to deal with these fires that are setting records for how much they consume, not only of the taxpayers' purse, but of our Nation's resource, habitat, watershed, look at the greenhouse gases, the smoke, the pollutants in the atmosphere, then we have to be able to give our forest managers the tools that they've proven can work in a collaborative way around communities and extend those out into the great reserves, the forests that are Condition Class 2 and 3.

And so I hope we can build a bipartisan coalition to do that. And I hope the chairman of the Resources Committee will help us on that. Because if we don't, then the change that's occurring in our climate with temperature will only cause these forests to grow more drought-ridden, more disease-ridden, more bug-infested, more likely to burn up in fire. And I'll tell you what, when you go back to this picture, Judge Grasty's grandkids, this is what's left behind. This is not snow, this is ashen, destroyed ground. These are the trees which, by the way, may never get hard.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. SALI. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. So we can do better. We can be better stewards of our Nation's forest. We owe it, as our legacy to the future, to be good stewards today. But we can't do it with the laws that are in place that impede the work. I mean, we owe it. I can't be more passionate about this. And I've worked with many of you in a bipartisan way to pass the Healthy Forest Restoration Act and the Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act, which the Senate failed to take up last Congress. We've got to do better than we're doing now.

This is a good little step forward in terms of managing the money so that the forest workers can do their work. We need to do more.

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to yield 2 minutes to a very valued member of our Committee on Natural Resources, the gentlelady from California (Mrs. CAPPS), and commend her for her assistance in developing this legislation as well.

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the FLAME Act. I thank Chairman RAHALL for yielding me time and for bringing this important legislation to the floor.

This bill comes at such a critical time. Our Nation is now and will continue to face longer and more intense fire seasons due to global warming and drought.

The cost of fighting fires has grown enormously in recent years, and projections indicate that this trend will only increase, especially in populated wildland urban interface areas.

The Forest Service has spent over \$1 billion per year on 5 of the last 7 years to extinguish fires. And wildland fire management activities are estimated to consume close to half of the Forest Service's budget this year. These escalating costs are having a significant impact on the Forest Service. For example, the Forest Service is forced to pull funds from other programs, leaving fewer funds available for camp ground maintenance and forest restoration.

The emergency fund created by the FLAME Act will reduce the need to deplete important Forest Service programs and will provide more reliable funding than uncertain year-to-year supplementals. Even more important, the FLAME Act will ensure the Forest Service has regular funding available for day-to-day fire management. This includes such important prevention steps, like FIREWISE Communities, hazardous fuels treatment, and restoration work.

It's absolutely essential that our efforts to fight today's fires don't hurt our efforts to prevent tomorrow's fires. This bill will ensure this is the case.

Mr. Speaker, the Zaca Fire that burned 240,000 acres in my congressional district last year cost the Forest Service \$120 million. That's one fire alone. With more than 1,700 fires in California this year already and the fire season is not even half over, it's pretty clear we're going to have to create an emergency Federal fund dedicated solely to devastating wildland fires.

This idea is long overdue, and this legislation deserves to be approved by the House. So I urge all of my colleagues to address the long-term wild-fire suppression funding situation by supporting the FLAME Act.

Mr. SALI. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX).

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, these fires are extremely dangerous, and our heart

goes out to all those people in California who are suffering from these fires and all over the country.

In my area, we rely on volunteer firefighters who are dedicated and whose service I cherish. However, we're putting these dedicated servants who are volunteers all over this country at a terrible disadvantage with gas costs at \$4.11 a gallon; 75 percent higher since the Democrats took control of Congress.

Now, let me say that again. Many Americans do not realize that the Democrats are in control of Congress. We are not being allowed to vote on increasing the supply of gasoline by the Democrats.

Now, what is the Democratic strategy for increasing supply of gasoline, which is what we have to do to bring down the price? Let me quote from an article in yesterday's Hill newspaper an aide to Speaker PELOSI.

□ 1500

"Right now our strategy on gas prices is 'Drive small cars and wait for the wind.'" Now, that reminds me of the episode which many people will remember from their history books, when the people of France were starving, people went to the Queen and said that the people need bread, they're begging for bread. She said, "Let them eat cake." Again, the strategy of the Democrats is "Right now our strategy on gas prices is 'Drive small cars and wait for the wind.'"

Folks, that's not what we want in terms of leadership. We need leadership on this issue. We need action to bring down the price of gasoline. And what will bring down the price of gasoline is American-made energy. We are not being allowed to produce American-made energy that we can produce to bring down the price of gasoline.

On the last bill, the Democrats talked about the fact that our unemployment rate is up. We had 54 straight months of job growth in this country until January of this year when gas prices really started to go up. The price of gas is affecting everything in this country. Again, it's Democratic leadership that has put us in this position, not Republican leadership.

I met today with people from the Turkey Federation. They're concerned about the price of feed. It's driving up the cost of food. Why? Because we're giving such great subsidies to ethanol; so corn is being used to produce ethanol, not going into feed for our animals. We know that's happening all over the place.

Why is it that Congress has a 9 percent approval rating right now? It's because, as the Wall Street Journal said, this is the most do-nothing Congress in 20 years.

We have to respond to the American people. The American people have to know that the Democrats are in charge and they are not responding. We can bring down the price of oil, we can help volunteer firefighters, we can bring

down the cost of food by providing American-made energy, and it's time that we started doing that.

Democrats think you can defy the law of supply and demand. We cannot do that. If we increase supply, we will be able to bring down the price of gasoline, and that's what we have to do.

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, in response to the last speaker, this gentleman certainly joins with her in commending our firefighters, especially those who have volunteered across our Nation to fight these fires where they occur. Our firefighters, as they showed us on 9/11, are certainly on the forefront of our Nation's defense and our first responders in this country.

In regard to the price of gas, though, let me remind the gentlewoman that when President George Bush took office, the price of gas, according to his own Energy Information Agency, was \$1.47. The last time I left West Virginia yesterday morning, it was \$4.14 a gallon.

Mr. Speaker, I am very honored to yield now such time as she may consume to the distinguished Speaker of the House of Representatives, Ms. PELOSI.

Ms. PELOSI. I thank the gentleman for yielding. I thank him and Mr. SALI for their leadership in bringing this important legislation to the floor in a timely fashion for us in California. I appreciate the good work of their committee.

Mr. Speaker, California today is fighting some of the most significant fires in terms of acres burned in our history, more than 675,000 acres, as the fires that have cost \$276 million to fight, according to the State and Federal reports, to date. The number of active wildfires up and down the coast of California is 330. There have been 1,731 fires since June 21.

Up to 20,000 firefighters are battling the blazes, many of them from neighboring States, many from far and wide across the country. Some from other countries, from Mexico, from Canada, from Australia, and New Zealand and other places, coming to the rescue. Later today we will have a resolution offered by my colleague from California (Mr. FARR), whose district is greatly impacted by these fires, a resolution to commend our firefighters, thank them for their service and their sacrifice, and that will be an important resolution and debate at that time.

But in addition to extending our sympathy to those for their losses and our appreciation to our firefighters, we have to do more. And today, Mr. RAHALL, you have given us the opportunity to do just that.

This legislation, the FLAME Act, before us creates an emergency Federal fund dedicated solely to combating the catastrophic wildfires. This funding will help ensure that fire prevention resources are not consumed by emergency firefighting expenses. Others have spoken about the need for us to even go beyond this act in terms of

treatment and prevention, but this act is important because this fund will prevent the soaking up of all of the other dollars that should be used for prevention but are used for extinction.

The FLAME Act also requires the administration to develop a cohesive wildfire management strategy. This is very, very important and long overdue. We need prevention. We need the treatment that was described by our colleague. A long-term strategy is needed and should include approaches to hiring and retaining experienced Federal wildland firefighters. We have enormously talented people in our country. We want many of them to work for the Federal Government, and that's why I oppose the administration's insistence on outsourcing and other policies that undercut the Federal workforce which extend to our wildland firefighters.

I want to commend Mr. RAHALL, whose leadership on the Natural Resources Committee is helping to strengthen efforts to better prepare for and combat wildfires, Mr. SALI as well, for bringing this legislation to the floor; Chairman RAÚL GRIJALVA of the Natural Resources Committee's National Parks, Forests and Public Lands Subcommittee; and Chairman NORM DICKS of the Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior. These outstanding leaders have brought forward bipartisan legislation that will help us fight future catastrophic fires and ensure that sufficient resources are dedicated to protecting both citizens and property. That is why this legislation has such broad bipartisan support and has been endorsed by five former chiefs of the Forest Service, the National Association of State Foresters, the National Association of Counties, the National Federation of Federal Employees, the Western Governors Association, and nearly 40 other leading organizations.

As I said earlier, our colleague Congressman FARR is to be commended for authoring the resolution the House will consider shortly that commends our firefighters from California and throughout America for their courageous service. As we thank our colleagues for this much-needed legislation, we should also honor the service of our firefighters, the California Office of Emergency Services, the National Guard for helping protect our neighbors' lives and homes in California and throughout the West.

We also express our deepest sympathies to those who have suffered deep personal losses as a result of these fires, particularly the families of two firefighters who lost their lives: Robert Roland of the Anderson Valley Fire Department, a volunteer fireman who lost his life fighting a fire; and John Hermo of Oregon. He came down from Oregon to help fight the fires. He was drowned while off duty but, nonetheless, here in the service of this important fight.

This critical legislation is an opportunity to provide consistent assistance and structure for relief in these times

of emergency. Again, we express our appreciation to the legislation's authors and hopes that the weather and the wind will assist our brave firefighters in combating the blazes. I know we all join in saying that we wish God will bless our courageous firefighters.

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

Mr. RAHALL. I urge support of the bill.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my disappointment with the bill before us today, H.R. 5541, the Forest Land Assistance, Management, and Enhancement Act or the FLAME Act. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the authors of this bill are well intentioned and truly want to solve the wildfire funding problem, but, sadly, the FLAME Act does not provide the comprehensive solution needed to adequately resolve this problem.

With the unhealthy conditions in our forests, extreme drought, and the increasing influx of people building in fire-prone areas, the size and severity of wildfires has dramatically increased. In the 1990s, an average of 3.2 million acres burned each year. Since 2000, that annual average has doubled to 7.1 million acres. The cost of fighting these wildfires has skyrocketed, from averages of \$400 million annually in the 1990s to roughly \$1.4 billion in 2007. This year an area roughly the size of Connecticut has already burned, at cost of over \$665 million to date.

This is not just a western issue. In my home State of Virginia, more acres have burned already this year than in any single entire year since 1963 at a cost of millions of dollars.

As firefighting costs have increased, the overall USDA Forest Service and Department of the Interior budgets have not. So, the Forest Service and DOI are footing the bill for these large, unpredictable emergency wildfires within the confines of a flat budget. For the Forest Service, this has meant a 77 percent increase in fire expenditures, a 23 percent decrease in funds to manage the national forests, and a 38 percent decrease in funds to help States and private owners manage their forests. Whether you're a wilderness advocate, a hunter, a mountain biker, or a logger, everyone will be impacted if we don't solve this problem.

Wildfires are not only consuming more forestland, they are consuming the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior themselves.

The FLAME Act falls short of protecting the Agencies' budgets from this continued erosion. H.R. 5541 does not change the current budget practice of funding firefighting based on the average expenses over the previous decade. Without this change, we will continue to see more and more of the Agencies' budgets go toward fire and less towards taking care of our Nation's forests.

In addition to this shortfall, the FLAME Act lacks a comprehensive set of solutions to the problem. Fixes to the wildfire budgeting system must be accompanied by strong cost containment and accountability standards while also ensuring firefighter safety, incentives to encourage communities to step up to the plate and reduce wildfire risks, and more tools to prevent or minimize damage due to catastrophic wildfires, particularly in our Federal forests.

H.R. 5648, the Emergency Wildland Fire Response Act of 2008 which Chairman PETERSON and I introduced along with a bipartisan group of our colleagues, provides this comprehensive solution. Unfortunately, negotiations for a more comprehensive solution were cut short.

I'm pleased to see that the authors of the FLAME Act have incorporated aspects of H.R. 5648 that encourage communities to step up to the plate and become "fire-ready" and encourage the Agencies to contain costs in their firefighting efforts.

Unfortunately, even with these improvements, the FLAME Act ignores the underlying problem causing the increases in firefighting costs—the unhealthy condition of our Federal forests. We will continue to see skyrocketing firefighting costs and more damage to our forests, watersheds, and communities unless we take steps to reduce fire risk in our Federal forests. We must provide the Agencies additional tools to get our Federal forests in a healthy, more fire resilient condition.

My alternative bill, H.R. 5648 provides a new contracting tool for the Forest Service to partner with States to address these unhealthy conditions in Federal forests. This authority has been tested in Colorado and Utah where it's proven to be very effective. Unfortunately, H.R. 5541 contains no such tools.

Mr. Speaker, as California and other States are dealing with massive wildfires even as we speak, we shouldn't squander our time with legislation that is only half the solution. H.R. 5541 is akin to using the watering can to fight a wildfire: it might have some short-term benefit of slowing down the flames, but ultimately, it won't stop the fire.

That being said, I will vote for this bill because it does move the ball forward. I'm hopeful that we can improve it as we move forward and ask my colleagues to join me in this effort.

Mr. RAHALL. 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 West Virginia (Mr. RAHALL) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5541, 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.

COMMENDING THE FIREFIGHTERS FROM CALIFORNIA AND THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES FOR THEIR COURAGEOUS ACTIONS AND SACRIFICES IN FIGHTING THE CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1322) commending the firefighters from California and throughout the United States for their courageous actions and sacrifices in fighting the California wildfires.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1322

Whereas, since June 20, 2008, there have been 1,781 wildfires in California started by

natural causes, including lightning, or by human activity;

Whereas 630,886 acres of land have burned in these wildfires, and, as of July 8, 2008, there are 323 wildfires still burning in California;

Whereas significant portions of National Forest System land and wilderness areas continue to burn in the Los Padres, Klamath, Shasta, Trinity, Mendocino, Plumas, Eldorado, Tahoe, Six Rivers, and Lassen National Forests;

Whereas areas of Butte, Monterey, Santa Barbara, and Shasta counties are under evacuation orders, and precautionary evacuation orders currently exist in areas of Kern, Mendocino, Monterey, Santa Barbara, and Plumas counties;

Whereas the wildfires are threatening 8,874 residences, 168 commercial buildings, and 2,085 outbuildings, but the heroic efforts of firefighters have limited the destruction to 40 residences, 1 commercial building, and 61 outbuildings;

Whereas firefighters have already been working for weeks on the front lines of a fire season that is just beginning;

Whereas firefighters have risked their lives and endured great hardship to protect life, property, and the environment;

Whereas there are currently 18,415 personnel committed, as well as 1,403 fire engines, 388 hand crews, 269 bulldozers, 392 water tenders, 31 air tankers, 30 incident management teams, and 95 helicopters;

Whereas 40 States and the District of Columbia have provided assistance to fight the wildfires;

Whereas the cooperative, unified approach to addressing wildland fires by Federal, State, local, tribal, and volunteer agencies have worked as one team under California's innovative incident command system;

Whereas the wildfires have been fought in a manner consistent with wilderness and wildlife protection, including protection of endangered species such as the Southern Sea Otter;

Whereas the people of California and the United States recognize that the dedication of the firefighters will remain steadfast throughout the ongoing suppression, repair, and rebuilding efforts;

Whereas firefighters continue to make progress in containing wildfires throughout California, and, as of July 8, 2008, more than 1,400 fires have been contained due to the diligent and tireless efforts of firefighters from California and throughout the United States, and

Whereas several firefighters have been injured and one firefighter has given his life while fighting the wildfires: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) commends firefighters from California and throughout the United States for their courageous actions and sacrifices in fighting wildfires on National Forest System land and other public lands in California;

(2) acknowledges the continued work of firefighters to protect National Forest System land, other public lands, and private property from further damage;

(3) praises the people of California for their great courage in this time of crisis; and

(4) extends its heartfelt sympathies to the families of those who have lost loved ones or their homes, businesses, or other property in the wildfires.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. RAHALL) and the gentleman from Idaho (Mr. SALI) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from West Virginia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which 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 West Virginia?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, since June 20, 2008, as we have heard the distinguished Speaker tell us, there have been 1,781 wildfires in the State of California, over 600,000 acres of land have burned, and there are 323 fires still burning in the State. Firefighters have been working for weeks on the front lines of these fires, risking their lives and enduring great hardship. These firefighters are making progress in containing California's wildfires. As to date, over 1,400 fires have been contained.

Sadly, several firefighters have been injured and one firefighter has given his life in fighting these devastating wildfires in California.

This resolution commends these firefighters for their courageous actions and sacrifices in fighting the wildfires in California. The resolution also extends heartfelt sympathies to the families of those who have lost their homes, businesses, or loved ones in this tragedy.

I ask my colleagues to support this resolution.

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

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

I too rise today to commend the heroic efforts of firefighters throughout our Nation. At times they are called to pay the ultimate sacrifice to save the life and property of others. I have had the honor of meeting the men and women who fight these wildfires in my State of Idaho, and there is no greater example of courage than these folks.

I understand how important it is to provide firefighters who battle wildfires with the right tools they need to do their job. Threats to human life are compounded by the fact that more and more people are living in homes near the fire-prone forests, placing themselves and the firefighters who try to protect them at greater risk.

In April of this year, I offered an amendment to the United States Fire Administration Reauthorization Act of 2008 that allowed the Administrator of the United States Fire Administration to develop and distribute information on the importance of clearing biomass from Federal lands. This commonsense amendment will require USFA to work in consultation with other Federal agencies, such as the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, to ensure that the USFA provides the best possible recommendation. As we come upon another deadly