

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from the Northern Mariana Islands (Mr. SABLAN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 337.

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. SABLAN. Madam Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

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.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PRE-DISASTER MITIGATION ACT OF 2009

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1746) to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to reauthorize the pre-disaster mitigation program of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1746

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 2009".

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) IN GENERAL.—The President shall award financial assistance under this section on a competitive basis and in accordance with the criteria in subsection (g).

“(2) MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM AMOUNTS.—In providing financial assistance under this section, the President shall ensure that the amount of financial assistance made available to a State (including amounts made available to local governments of the State) for a fiscal year—

“(A) is not less than the lesser of—

“(i) \$575,000; or

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

“(B) does not exceed the amount that is equal to 15 percent of the total 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 2010, 2011, and 2012.”.

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

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

(2) in the heading for subsection (i) by striking “PRE-DISASTER” 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 gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. OLSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam 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, H.R. 1746.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I want to thank the gentleman from Texas for generously managing on the Republican side. Thank you for your participation. And I want to welcome, Madam Speaker, the gentleman, once again to our committee. It's his first term in Congress, first term on our committee, and it's good to have his participation. Appreciate it very much.

I was delayed getting here to the floor because of a number of meetings, but the most particularly, and sort of fitting was a session with James Lee Witt, former administrator of FEMA, who did a superb job during his tenure at FEMA, and who actually initiated Project Impact, which was the predecessor of the legislation, or the predecessor idea for the legislation we bring to the floor today. It was called then Project Impact. And it was the idea of administrator James Lee Witt, after his experience with a number of tragedies that could have been prevented or substantially mitigated, that is, the effect of the natural disaster could substantially have been mitigated if cities, counties, States, local agencies, had taken a few practical steps that would be far lower cost in initial impact than the broader costs of a natural disaster, whether an earthquake, a flood, hurricane, or other tragedy.

Over 100 communities actually participated in Project Impact. One of the most significant beneficiaries of Project Impact was the City of Seattle, which was awarded a grant of \$50 million for very specific actions to take in Seattle to strengthen buildings, strengthen bridges, strengthen portions of the Alaska Way Viaduct, a portion of Highway 5 that goes through the City of Seattle and is a focal point of a great deal of maritime activity and trucking and passenger vehicle activity.

For a \$50 million investment, they put all of the strengthening activities in place, and a year later, the earth-

quake struck Seattle. And the Mayor of Seattle, I think it was Mayor Nichols at the time, said, if we had not made this investment, it would have cost the people of Seattle \$500 million to repair the damage that the earthquake would have caused had they not made this very small investment. The irony of the event and of the announcement is that was also the day that the Bush administration chose to terminate Project Impact.

I have experience in my district of pre-disaster mitigation, when, in 1999, hurricane-like force winds blew through the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, a wilderness area on the U.S./Canadian border in my district that stretches nearly 110 miles along the Canadian border. They're called a derecho, D-E-R-E-C-H-O, derecho, from the Spanish. Straight line winds, 15 miles across, 40 miles in length, at 100 miles an hour, blew down 26 million trees.

The U.S. Forest Service did a computer analysis of all previous forest fires, and calculating with the amount of fuel on the ground, that when a lightning strike would hit that blow-down, drying out timber, it would create a fireball 50,000 feet into the air.

Action had to be taken in the areas outside the wilderness to protect homes and resort facilities and outfitter facilities, and within the boundary waters to do controlled burns, because timber harvesting is not allowed within a wilderness area.

We turned to James Lee Witt and FEMA for pre-disaster mitigation funding to support homes, to install sprinkler systems, and resorts to install sprinkler systems. Four years later, a fire known in the area as the Ham Lake fire, broke out. The local volunteer fire department, attempting to respond, found that their pumper truck was inoperative. They could have put the fire out in that little area, but they were unable to. It gathered force and burned 76,000 acres, half in the U.S. and half in Canada.

The homes that were spared were those that had installed the sprinkler systems from the FEMA pre-disaster mitigation program. The ones that didn't have the sprinkler systems, or who didn't maintain them, were burned; 148 structures in all burned, and 135 were saved.

This legislation will establish the pre-disaster mitigation program out into the future because, while the previous Project Impact was terminated, Congress, under the previous Republican years, re-established, reinstated Project Impact as pre-disaster mitigation, and the authority will sunset on September 30. So with bipartisan support, we bring this legislation to the floor to extend the program.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

First of all, I'd like to thank our chairman for his kind words, and more importantly, for your leadership on

this committee. This is a very important issue, and I'm proud to stand with you today in support of this bill.

And I do rise in support of H.R. 1746, the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Act of 2009, which reauthorizes the successful pre-disaster mitigation programs 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 a disaster strikes.

Prior to the creation of the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program, hazard mitigation primarily occurred after a disaster had occurred through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

We know that every disaster costs us in damages to homes, businesses and infrastructure and potentially to the loss of lives. Implementing mitigation measures against disasters has proven to go a long way in minimizing damage and saving lives. The Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program prevents damage and destruction by helping communities to act proactively through projects that reduce the costs and limit the adverse impacts of future disasters.

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It has been shown that mitigation programs like the pre-disaster mitigation program also save taxpayer dollars. Both the Congressional Budget Office and the National Institute of Building Sciences have determined that, for every dollar invested in mitigation, \$3 are saved in future losses.

Since their 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. Ensuring this program continues and supporting mitigation efforts is critically important as our communities prepare for disasters.

In conclusion, mitigation works. It saves lives, limits future damage and reduces Federal disaster costs, and the pre-disaster mitigation program is an effective program that advances that goal.

Thank you again. I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

Mr. Chairman, do you have anymore speakers on your side?

Mr. OBERSTAR. I advise the gentleman we have no further speakers. If the gentleman is prepared to close, I will have some closing remarks, and then we'll conclude.

Mr. OLSON. In that case, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OBERSTAR. The gentleman made a very thoughtful statement, Madam Speaker, about the pre-disaster mitigation program, and I very greatly appreciate his observations and the bipartisan spirit within which our committee brought this legislation forward.

Clearly, mitigation saves money. I gave an example of a situation in my

district, but the devastation of flooding at the Red River in North Dakota is another example of the real impact of natural disasters, and the communities along the Red River of the North, on both the Minnesota and North Dakota sides, have benefited from pre-disaster mitigation funding. Nonetheless, they face huge challenges every year.

The Congressional Budget Office and the National Institute of Building Sciences have issued reports showing that, for every dollar spent on pre-disaster mitigation, future losses are reduced by \$3 to \$4. The Multihazard Mitigation Council, the advisory body of the National Institute of Building Sciences, said: "A dollar spent on mitigation saves society an average of \$4," and that flood mitigation, according to the council, yields even greater savings. On average, future losses are reduced "by about \$3 for every dollar spent on those projects, including both Federal and non-Federal spending."

I also cited the city of Seattle. I misquoted the mayor. It was not Mayor Nickels. It was Mayor Paul Schell who deserves great credit for wisely using pre-disaster mitigation funds just prior to the Nisqually earthquake hitting on February 28, 2001.

As for the Red River of the North, investments made by cities on both the Minnesota and North Dakota sides have resulted in far less damage than those communities experienced prior to making those investments. After the 1997 flood, FEMA spent \$23 million to acquire vulnerable homes and move them out of the floodplain. In 2006, a flood came within 2 feet of the 1997 flood level, and those mitigation investments saved some \$24.6 million, a return of 107 percent on the investment made.

Mitigation, clearly, is an investment in people, in property, in protection, and that's why the National Association of Counties, the International Association of Emergency Managers, the Association of State Floodplain Managers, the National Emergency Management Association, and the National Association of Flood and Stormwater Management Agencies, as well as the Public Works Association, all have endorsed this legislation.

So I earnestly appeal for a strong vote, and I am now prepared to close, if the gentleman is prepared to yield back his time, Madam Speaker.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1746, "Pre-Disaster Mitigation Act of 2009." I want to thank my colleague Congressman JAMES OBERSTAR of Minnesota for introducing this legislation.

While tragedy has ripped through our communities, from 9/11 to Hurricane Katrina, leaving an enormous amount of devastation, Americans continue to demonstrate yet again the amazing unity, strength and resilience that we possess. Whether rich or poor, black or white, young or old, Democrat or Republican, everyone has been working together to respond, recover, rebuild and move forward.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this vital piece of legislation that will

amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to reauthorize the pre-disaster mitigation program of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Stafford Act, is a Federal law designed to bring an orderly and systemic means of federal natural disaster assistance for State and local governments in carrying out their responsibilities to aid citizens. This law establishes a process for requesting and obtaining a Presidential disaster declaration, defines the type and scope of assistance available under the Stafford Act, and sets the conditions for obtaining that assistance.

It created the system in place today by which a Preside Disaster Declaration of an emergency triggers financial and physical assistance through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA. The Act gives FEMA the responsibility for coordinating government wide relief efforts. The Federal Response Plan it implements includes the contributions of 28 Federal agencies and non-governmental organizations, such as the American Red Cross.

We must work together to improve access to housing and the critical infrastructure necessary to ensure that Americans and their communities are safe. Where unacceptable vulnerabilities remain, swift action must be taken to eliminate them. I am committed to ensuring the implementation of such action.

In the weeks that followed Hurricane Katrina, thousands of families struggled to survive with no electricity, including no air conditioning in the sweltering heat, which had a particularly severe impact on the elderly, disabled, impoverished and other vulnerable populations. Clearly, we need to invest substantial funds to improve our electric grids to ensure that the disparate impact on vulnerable populations are corrected and are never allowed to reoccur. I was particularly concerned that neither the utility companies nor the emergency management personnel had lists of or could expeditiously provide generators to the vulnerable individuals and communities residing in hospitals, clinics, senior housing, and assisted living communities who would be disparately impacted by the power outages in the aftermath of the storm. Accordingly, I have introduced legislation in Congress to ensure that utility companies are held accountable. I was also dismayed that creditors for healthcare providers interfered with the ability of hospitals to receive funds from insurance and business interruption claims that are vitally necessary to ensure that hospitals can be open to serve communities in dire need of healthcare.

Furthermore, the response efforts to Hurricane Ike in Texas, unfortunately similar to Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana but to a smaller extent, revealed breakdowns in communication between the State and local government on the one hand and FEMA and the Federal Government on the other hand. These communication failures resulted in unnecessary and avoidable delays in deploying vital resources in a timely fashion to individuals and families in need through Disaster Recovery Centers, DRCs, in locations which are accessible to the affected communities. I look forward to hearing from the panelists on how we can increase the role that FEMA along with local and State agencies can play in the response and recovery efforts to natural disasters in order to ensure the most expeditious

and efficient decision-making process possible. Whether it be through legislation or simply improved preparation and communication, we must take concrete steps to ensure that in the ongoing recovery effort, bureaucratic barriers are eliminated and minimized and that resources are deployed to individuals and families in need efficaciously.

As a senior member of the House Homeland Security Committee, which has oversight over the Federal Emergency Management Administration, FEMA, I am working to ensure that our communities are prepared to deal with natural disasters. I am committed to working with members of this Select Committee and the other panelists, Federal and State agencies, and the companies that manage Houston's critical infrastructure to ensure that Houston and Texas are prepared for the next natural disaster. The protection of our homeland and the security of our neighborhoods are at the forefront of my legislative agenda.

Madam Speaker, it is my hope that this legislation, which is necessary in policies, procedures, and protocols to ensure that: first responders and emergency management personnel across America are better prepared for future disasters; communication and coordination between local, State, and Federal agencies is improved; and all Americans can recover more quickly from a future disaster.

Mr. OLSON. Madam Speaker, there being no Members wishing to speak on my side, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. OBERSTAR. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1746.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam 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.

GREAT LAKES ICEBREAKER REPLACEMENT ACT

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1747) to authorize appropriations for the design, acquisition, and construction of a combined buoy tender-icebreaker to replace icebreaking capacity on the Great Lakes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1747

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 "Great Lakes Icebreaker Replacement Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that—

(1) five of the Coast Guard's Great Lakes icebreakers are nearing the end of their useful lives;

(2) two other Coast Guard icebreaking assets have experienced difficulty in heavy ice conditions;

(3) during the spring of 2008, United States-flag vessels operating on the Great Lakes suffered more than \$1,300,000 in damages to their hulls because the Coast Guard did not have enough assets available to keep Great Lakes shipping lanes open;

(4) during the 2006-2007 ice season, shipments of iron ore, coal, and limestone on the Great Lakes exceeded 20,000,000 tons;

(5) during the 2006-2007 ice season, the transportation of 10,400,000 tons of iron ore on the Great Lakes helped support 100,000 jobs at steel mills and 300,000 jobs at supplier industries by keeping those industries working during the winter season; and

(6) the 6,400,000 tons of coal shipped on the Great Lakes during the 2006-2007 ice season kept the Great Lakes region supplied with electricity.

SEC. 3. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There is authorized to be appropriated \$153,000,000 for necessary expenses of the Coast Guard for the design, acquisition, and construction of a combined buoy tender-icebreaker to replace icebreaking capacity on the Great Lakes, to remain available until expended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. OLSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 1747.

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

There was no objection.

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

Despite all of the concern about global climate change and climate warming and of the melting of the glaciers—and the last great glacier did melt and retreat some 10,000 years ago—every November, it makes a comeback in the northern tier States, especially on the Great Lakes. As the cold winds sweep down from the Arctic regions across Canada and as the ice gathers on the shores and extends across, still occasionally, although it has been several years, Lake Superior does freeze completely over.

When it doesn't freeze completely over, an ice sheet extends a long distance out from the shoreline, clogging the navigation channels, making transit difficult on the Sault Sainte Marie, on the St. Mary's River and down into the lower lakes where, from mid-November through mid-January and then again in early spring, our Great Lakes' bulk carriers must make that transit to deliver iron ore to the steel mills in the lower lake ports and coal from the Potter River Basin in Wyoming-Montana that comes by unit train to the ports of Duluth and Superior; and they must transit that coal to lower lake

coal facilities. The lowest cost, most energy-efficient and most environmentally friendly means of moving bulk commodities are by waterway, and this great waterway of the Great Lakes is absolutely critical.

During the 2006-2007 winter season, 10.5 million tons of iron ore moved during the winter shipping season. That ore supports 100,000 jobs at lower lake steel mills, 300,000 jobs at associated industries. In the same winter months, some 6.5 million tons of coal were shipped on the Great Lakes to supply the power plants in lower lake communities with their coal facilities, but we don't have enough icebreaking capacity to keep those channels open, to keep the ports open, to escort vessels through the heavy ice era in the fall and in the early spring.

The Coast Guard, which does its very best with the Mackinaw and with some smaller harbor icebreakers, has made a valiant effort, but the shippers on the Great Lakes, in particular in this past season, said they have frequently had a laker moving out but impeded by ice. The Mackinaw could break a channel, but then it would be on call in the lower lake ports, and the smaller harbor icebreakers couldn't keep the channel open for those 60,000-ton vessels to move iron ore or aggregate or sand and gravel or limestone as needed in the iron ore production process.

So the clear call from Great Lakes' port and shipping and shipper interests has been add an icebreaker, a real companion to the Mackinaw. The previous Mackinaw icebreaker was built in 1940 and served 60 years and, finally, was gracefully retired; but its replacement simply can't be in two places at once. If we're going to keep our economy moving and our economy functioning effectively, we need that icebreaking capability in the upper lakes and in the lower lakes, often at the same time on the same days. So with two icebreakers, our Great Lakes economy will be able to function effectively.

I reserve the balance of my time, Madam Speaker.

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

Madam Speaker, while my home State of Texas doesn't have near the opportunities for icebreaking that the chairman's home State of Minnesota has, like him, I, too, rise in support of H.R. 1747 and this body's continued efforts to enhance the Coast Guard's operational capabilities in the Great Lakes and nationwide.

A new Coast Guard icebreaker of the Great Lakes would significantly enhance the safety and efficiency of maritime traffic in the region. The Coast Guard is aware of the need for further capabilities in the Great Lakes.

Earlier this winter, the Coast Guard temporarily stationed an ice-strengthened buoy tender in the Great Lakes for the end of the icebreaking season. This move, while greatly appreciated, is not a sustainable solution. H.R. 1747,