

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Illinois will control the time.

There was no objection.

Mr. COSTELLO. I thank Chairman OBERSTAR for yielding the time, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

In the 110th Congress, the House passed the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2007, which was H.R. 2881. That legislation reauthorized the FAA for 4 years. In May of this year, the House voted again to pass a comprehensive reauthorization bill, this time numbered H.R. 915, the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2009.

Unfortunately, the Senate has been unable to come to an agreement on its bill over the last 2 years. So for the past 2 years, Congress has passed extensions of the Federal Aviation Administration's funding and authority through the end of budget year 2009. The latest extension expires next week. So today we're considering another extension.

H.R. 3607 would extend the taxes, programs, and funding of the FAA through December of 2009. This bill extends FAA funding and contract authority for 3 months; provides \$1 billion in Airport Improvement Program funding through December of 2009; extends the War Risk Insurance program; and extends the Small Community Air Service Development Program. H.R. 3607 would ensure that our National Aviation System continues to operate until a full FAA reauthorization can be enacted.

As I have indicated many times since the passage of the House FAA reauthorization bill back in 2007, we need to pass a long-term bill so that we can meet the growing demands placed on our Nation's aviation infrastructure. Modernizing our antiquated air traffic control system and repairing our crumbling infrastructure need to be at the top of our list of priorities. While I have some concerns with the House-passed bill, I look forward to addressing these issues in conference to develop bipartisan solutions on some of the more controversial provisions.

□ 1245

I urge our colleagues in the other body to complete their work on a comprehensive FAA reauthorization package in a timely fashion. While I am disappointed that the FAA has gone so long without a comprehensive reauthorization, I support this extension as the best alternative to keep the FAA and the national air space system running safely until we can take up and pass a bipartisanship and bicameral bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Again, I want to thank Chairman OBERSTAR for yielding time to me. I rise in support of H.R. 3607, the Federal Aviation Administration Extension

Act of 2009. I want to thank Chairman OBERSTAR, Ranking Member MICA, Mr. PETRI, and Chairman RANGEL and Ranking Member CAMP for bringing this legislation to the floor today. Chairman RANGEL of the Ways and Means Committee and Mr. CAMP were very cooperative in extending the taxes so we could do this extension today.

As Chairman OBERSTAR indicated, in a previous Congress and again in May of this year, the House passed the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2009, a long-term authorization of the FAA programs. We have been waiting on the other body for several months to bring a bill to the floor and pass it. In fact, it has been almost 2 years since Vision 100, the last FAA reauthorization bill, expired. Congress has been unable to pass a multiyear FAA bill; so then, instead of approving that bill, because of the other body, we have had to approve a series of short-term extensions. However, until H.R. 915 is signed into law, it is imperative that we not allow the FAA's critical programs to lapse.

The Aviation Trust Fund is currently operating under a short-term extension that expires on September 30, 2009. To that end, H.R. 3607 would extend not only the aviation taxes and expenditure authority, but also the Airport Improvement Program contract authority until December 31 of this year.

H.R. 3607 provides an additional \$1 billion in AIP contract authority, resulting in a full year contract authority level of \$4 billion for fiscal year 2009. These additional funds will allow airports to proceed with critical safety and capacity enhancement projects, particularly larger projects that require a full year's worth of AIP funds to move forward.

Mr. Speaker, aviation is too important to our Nation's economy, contributing \$1.2 trillion in output and approximately 11.4 million jobs, to allow the taxes or the funding for critical aviation programs to expire. Congress must ensure that this extension passes today to reduce delays and congestion, improve safety and efficiency, stimulate the economy, and create jobs. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PETRI. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the ranking Republican on the full Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA).

Mr. MICA. Thank you for recognizing me, and I just want to take a minute to add my support for the reauthorization that is before us today. I want to associate myself with the comments of Chairman OBERSTAR, the full committee chairman. I am pleased as the ranking Republican on the committee to join him, and I also support Mr. COSTELLO in his statements for the reauthorization.

This delay in reauthorizing policy and projects and all of the Federal direction to the Federal Aviation Administration, this delay is unprecedented.

Not only has the House acted appropriately, we passed in the last Congress and we passed again in this Congress authorization. The other body has yet to act on this important matter and left us in limbo. I am hoping that this is, in fact, the last extension. This is, in fact, the seventh extension. This is, in fact, I believe, the longest period we have gone in history without in place policy and law authorizing the Federal Aviation Administration.

One of the major issues is behind us, and that is the issue of the air traffic controllers' contract. That has been resolved. The administration has cut a deal with the union. I think it has got about a three-quarters of a billion dollar price tag, but that is off the table. It was an item that was contentious.

This legislation should be able to be conferenced with the other body in less than an hour. There are just one or two remaining items. I cannot believe that we are here again with a seventh request for extension. We have no choice but to request this extension now. Hopefully, Congress can reach a bipartisan and bicameral accord and pass a long-term FAA reauthorization. It is critical for the next generation. It is critical for having a policy in place that runs one of the key safety regulatory agencies in our government vital to the aviation industry and the economy of our Nation.

So I am pleased to join Mr. OBERSTAR, Mr. COSTELLO, our ranking member, Mr. PETRI, and I am hoping that we can move forward both with this reauthorization and then with a permanent bill.

Mr. PETRI. I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, I urge our colleagues to vote in favor of this extension. I join Mr. MICA and Mr. OBERSTAR and others in hoping that the other body will move very quickly on the reauthorization so we can get a bill on the President's desk. I urge my colleagues to support this extension.

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. 3607.

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.

EXTENDING CONDOLENCES TO VICTIMS OF GEORGIA FLOODS

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 765) expressing condolences to the families of the individuals killed during unusual storms and floods in the State of Georgia between September 18 and 21, 2009, and expressing gratitude to all of the emergency personnel who continue to work with

unyielding determination to meet the needs of Georgia's residents.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 765

Whereas the State of Georgia has been hit by days of unusually strong storms that have resulted in downpours and flooding, beginning on September 18, 2009;

Whereas numerous Georgia rivers and creeks, including the Chattooga and Chattahoochee Rivers and Chickamauga Creek, swollen by days of rain, have overtopped their banks, creating a dangerous and deadly situation for nearby residents;

Whereas the storms and floods have taken human lives;

Whereas the floodwater has destroyed homes, flooded roadways, including major highways, compromised drinking water, severely damaged plumbing systems, and caused significant damage to homes and businesses;

Whereas on September 21, 2009, Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue declared a state of emergency in 17 counties, including Carroll, Catoosa, Chattooga, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Crawford, DeKalb, Douglas, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Newton, Paulding, Rockdale, Stephens, and Walker Counties;

Whereas the National Weather Service estimated that between 15 and 22 inches of rain have fallen in the metropolitan Atlanta counties of Gwinnett, Douglas, and Paulding between September 18 and 21, 2009;

Whereas the rains have broken a 130-year-old record at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport;

Whereas hundreds of Georgians have been evacuated from their homes and over 300 people are seeking refuge in shelters;

Whereas the Governor estimates that over 1,000 residences are seriously flooded;

Whereas the weather has closed schools in several counties;

Whereas as many as tens of thousands of people have been without power in metropolitan Atlanta;

Whereas search and rescue operations are continuing in several counties where the water continues to rise;

Whereas the Georgia Emergency Management Agency has coordinated with local emergency personnel and has worked tirelessly to protect human lives and rescue those threatened by the floods;

Whereas the Georgia Emergency Management Agency continues to facilitate requests for assistance from citizens and first responders all across the State of Georgia;

Whereas the Georgia Emergency Management Agency and other first responders have acted valiantly in life safety response operations, including delivering sandbags and rescuing people trapped in their cars and homes from the floodwater;

Whereas the Federal Emergency Management Agency has activated its national and regional response coordination centers and is working closely with the State of Georgia to monitor the response efforts and identify and respond to any immediate emergency needs for the citizens and communities of the State that are impacted by these devastating floods; and

Whereas volunteers are giving their time to help ensure that evacuees are sheltered, clothed, fed, and comforted through this traumatic event: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) offers its deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in the flooding in the State of Georgia;

(2) expresses its condolences to the families who lost their homes and other property in the floods;

(3) expresses gratitude and appreciation to the people of the State of Georgia and the surrounding States, who continue to work to protect people from the still rising floodwaters;

(4) expresses its support as the Federal Emergency Management Agency continues its efforts to respond to any needs of the citizens and communities affected by the flooding; and

(5) honors the emergency responders, within and beyond metropolitan Atlanta and the State of Georgia, for their bravery and sacrifice during this tragedy.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. OBERSTAR. 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 H. Res. 765.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I rise in strong support of H. Res. 765.

We have come to this floor many times over the past 2½ years with resolutions to express our condolences for victims of the ravages of nature, to the first responders, to the families of the victims, and we are here again in the wake of unprecedented flooding in Georgia following on an extraordinary period of drought in that State.

This tragic disaster, the complete toll for which has yet to be calculated, is a reminder that amidst all of our concern for homeland security, as my good friend, former chairman of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, DON YOUNG said many times, we face that tragedy every year with disasters in the form of nature's ravages upon our countryside, and we are here and we meet again today to thank the men and women who serve the Nation, serve the State of Georgia and the people of that State as police officers, firefighters, emergency managers, emergency medical personnel, who every day place themselves in danger to save the lives of their fellow citizens. Not only in Georgia but all over this country, we all see it, each of us in our districts.

When tragedy comes calling, whether an emergency medical problem facing a neighbor or large-scale natural disaster, the Nation's emergency responders, our charitable organizations, are the first ones on the scene to provide their professional help and their comfort and their support. They are well-trained, highly skilled people on the front lines within this country responding to the needs of people and

also responding to mitigate the damage and the ravage of natural disasters.

This is also National Preparedness Month, and while the devastation in Georgia and surrounding States is tragic, this is an opportunity for us to think in a broader context of all of the types of disasters, whether fire on the west coast in California or flood on the east coast, are constantly a threat to our fellow citizens.

Mr. Speaker, at this point I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LEWIS) such time as he may consume.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise to thank Chairman OBERSTAR and members of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for moving with all deliberate speed to bring this resolution to the floor today.

As many of you know, for the past week it has been raining all over the State of Georgia. In some parts of the State, the rain has been devastating. I offer this resolution with my colleagues from the State of Georgia to express my sincerest sympathies to the families of those who have lost their loved ones in the floods. This is a terrible tragedy for the people of the State of Georgia. Some families have lost their homes; they have lost everything.

I am deeply concerned about the damage this flooding has caused to homes and businesses, to roads and bridges. Some schools in the State remain closed, and at least one school has been destroyed. The Governor is estimating that the damage will rise into the hundreds of millions of dollars, and that is based on what can be seen. Many areas are still underwater, and we hear that the rain is not yet over.

I appeal to the citizens of Georgia to be careful as you move around. It is impossible to know how deep the waters are or how fast they are moving.

Finally, I want to thank all of the emergency personnel for all of their hard work in protecting people from the dangers of the floodwaters.

I know that my colleagues join me in my commitment to working with the State, city and county officials, as well as FEMA and the Federal Government, to ensure that the State of Georgia has everything it needs to protect human life and to help our citizens rebuild and recover from these unbelievable waters, this unbelievable flood.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members of this body to support this resolution.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

This resolution would express the condolences of this Congress to the families of those tragically lost during the storms and floods that hit Georgia earlier this week. As our distinguished chairman explained earlier, it would also serve to recognize and remind the American people of the work of the emergency responders, the first responders during this disaster and, frankly, during all disasters.

Earlier this week, those storms hit part of the Southeast, soaking the region for days. In many cases it is still

going on and causing significant flooding. Those rains caused severe flooding, destroying bridges and forcing hundreds and hundreds of people to be evacuated. Unfortunately, those same floodwaters caused a number of tragic deaths, including the death of a 2-year-old boy.

We Floridians, unfortunately, know all too well what kind of devastation a storm like this can cause.

□ 1300

We also have been able to see firsthand the first responders and other emergency personnel and the Red Cross, how they continuously work tirelessly, as they are doing right now as we speak, to respond in the aftermath to those who are hurting and suffering still.

So I do think that it is very fitting to remember those lives that have been lost, tragically lost, and to once again express our deep profound gratitude to those involved in the response and the recovery effort.

I also want to thank the distinguished chairman of the committee, Mr. OBERSTAR, for bringing this up so quickly. I support passage of the resolution and urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the distinguished gentleman from Georgia (Mr. DEAL).

Mr. DEAL of Georgia. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Yesterday, I visited the sections in my congressional district that were affected by the floods that were brought on by the torrential rains that our State has experienced. I was accompanied on that visit by county commissioners and other State and local officials.

Having seen the devastation that has been brought on by these rising waters, I am pleased to join with my other colleagues from Georgia in urging President Obama to declare portions of Georgia, including three counties in my congressional district, to be Federal disaster areas. I was deeply moved by the flood damage that was caused in the counties of Catoosa, Forsyth and Walker that are in my district. Chickamauga Creek was nearing its crest, and there are a number of homes and businesses that are now covered or partially covered by deep, muddy water.

Unfortunately, many of those who are affected by this are not covered by the standard insurance policies, and therefore they are going to be left without any help other than the help already being provided by churches and civic organizations and other parts of our community as they respond to the needs of their fellow citizens. Therefore, I urge the President to begin the process immediately of providing Federal assistance.

Citizens of Georgia have always been willing to respond when disaster strikes, and many of our citizens have gone to other parts of the country when hurricanes had hit. I know that

as this water subsides there will be organized volunteers who will come to the aid of the citizens in our State.

I am also hopeful that people of faith will continue to join me in praying for those who are hurting for the loss of their loved ones and the loss of their home and their other possessions. We should pray for those who are willing to volunteer during this time of tragedy, sometimes at great risk.

I applaud the work of the local and State emergency responders who have been on duty, both before and after this storm. Public safety agencies have once again risen to the occasion, and I want to extend my thanks to each of them, because many of them have been on duty around the clock. We have so many professionals who work tirelessly to make certain that our communities are safe and that people are rescued when they are in peril, and such is the case in our State today.

Mr. Speaker, I therefore wholeheartedly support this resolution and urge its adoption.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, although our Speaker is in line to address us, she has graciously agreed to yield to the gentleman from Georgia.

I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Thank you so much, Chairman OBERSTAR, and thank you for your graciousness, Madam Speaker, and your offer of help and condolences that you have extended to each member of our Georgia delegation and to all the people of Georgia. We thank you for your concern, and yours, Mr. Chairman.

I certainly rise with a heavy heart. This is an extraordinarily challenging time for the people of my State of Georgia and certainly for people in my congressional district, for, Mr. Speaker, of the nine persons that have lost their lives so far, six of them have come from my district, and, as a matter of fact, six have come from one county, and that is Douglas County. So our hearts and our prayers go out for all of these families.

Rest assured that this Congress has their thoughts and their needs deep in our bosom at this time of great sacrifice and of great hurt and pain. It is important for the people of Georgia to know that we in Congress are moving swiftly in concert with our President to make sure that this gets the signature of a statement of national emergency and a declaration of emergency, because until that happens, we will not be able to get the funds that are needed.

That is what is of utmost importance now. There are people without homes. There are people without homes without any flood insurance, which means that that would be on their backs to pay for, which many do not have. The estimate of damage is over \$300 million as we speak and continues to grow. So we need to move with all swiftness, with all quick dispatch, to get this

Federal aid down and to make sure that the people, particularly in those areas that were hit throughout Metro Atlanta, but also in the areas of Cobb County in my district.

We have been in touch with our county commissions in those areas, with Tom Wortham in Douglas County and the mayor of Douglasville, Mayor Mickey Thompson, who are working feverishly to make sure that they are responding to the needs of our citizens.

So, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chairman, all the Members of the Congress, we certainly appreciate the condolences, and we appreciate the care and the sincerity that this Congress is expressing to the people of Georgia, and we assure the people of Georgia that we will get the help down to them quickly.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I reserve my time.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), our distinguished Speaker of the House.

Ms. PELOSI. I thank the gentleman for yielding and for giving us this opportunity to come to the floor to express on the floor of the House our condolences to the people of Georgia in this very, very sad time.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Georgia delegation, for calling attention to the serious flooding in Georgia and other parts of the American southeast and again with this resolution to offer our condolences on behalf of all Members of the Congress.

Of course, we offer our condolences to those who lost their lives. We are sad for those who have lost their homes and their livelihoods. Those lost, as Mr. DAVID SCOTT referenced, include nine people dead, dozens stranded and more than 30,000 without electricity. Those lost included a teenage boy trying to rescue another in danger; a mother of two young children; and a very young child, 2 years old, swept away from his father's arms. When that word came over the TV, my colleagues, all of America wept. It is just so sad. Our hearts ache for those who have lost so much.

But in the emerging sun, what do we see? We see neighbors coming to the aid of neighbors and the tireless work of our first responders.

Members of Congress are being briefed on the ongoing events by our members of the Georgia delegation. Thank you, Mr. LEWIS, for being the author of this resolution. We are all trying to reach out to see what we can do to help individually in conversation and as a Congress.

I know that President Obama will act upon the request that he has just received. He has received the request from Governor Perdue. Now he has received the formal documentation from FEMA, and I am certain that it will be addressed immediately.

The thoughts and prayers of this entire Congress and the people we represent, the American people, are with

the people of Georgia today and in these days ahead as we work with them to ensure that they have all that they need. I hope it is some level of comfort to them that their representatives on both sides of the aisle from Georgia have made us fully aware of the direct impact that the rains have had on Georgia. We stand ready to help with whatever we can do officially, but always with what we can do in our prayers.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I reserve my time.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the distinguished gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHNSON), whose district also covers a great portion of the area ravaged by the floods.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents are suffering greatly this week. In just 72 hours, the Atlanta metropolitan area has received 15 to 22 inches of relentless rain, causing widespread flooding, numerous deaths and hundreds of millions of dollars of property damage.

I rise today, Mr. Speaker, to express my deepest concern for the victims of this terrible flood, to join Governor Perdue in urging the President to declare an emergency for the State of Georgia, and to urge passage of the resolution before us.

Sponsored by my colleague, Congressman JOHN LEWIS of Atlanta, this resolution will offer our sympathy to flood victims and our gratitude to those heroes who have worked tirelessly to protect people from the floodwaters.

I know that Speaker PELOSI is doing everything that she can to assist the people of Georgia, and for that I thank her. As a matter of fact, as early as yesterday morning she was on the phone with each of us to express her concerns and to also pledge any assistance that she could give. So we appreciate that.

Governor Perdue and President Obama have been on the phone coordinating efforts to deal with this national disaster. I applaud the Governor for the State's competent and effective response, and I join him in urging our President to make available Federal funds to supplement Georgia's efforts to mitigate the effects of the flood.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents and all the residents of flooded areas in the American South have shown tremendous courage in the face of washed-out roads, destroyed homes and treacherous conditions. Let us pass this resolution as a small token of our empathy and support.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers and yield back 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 agree to the resolution, H. Res. 765.

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. OBERSTAR. 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.

□ 1315

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 324, SANTA CRUZ VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA ACT

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 760 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 760

Resolved, That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 324) to establish the Santa Cruz Valley national Heritage Area, and for other purposes. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. The amendment printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution shall be considered as adopted. The bill, as amended, shall be considered as read. All points of order against provisions in the bill, as amended, are waived. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill, as amended, to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) one hour of debate equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Natural Resources; and (2) one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX). All time yielded during consideration of the rule is for debate only.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CARDOZA. I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on House Resolution 760.

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

There was no objection.

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

House Resolution 760 provides for the consideration of House Resolution 324, the Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area Act. The rule provides 1 hour of general debate, equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Natural Resources. The rule waives

all points of order against consideration of the bill, except for clause 9 and clause 10 of rule XXI. Mr. Speaker, the rule also provides for the adoption of an amendment printed in the Rules Committee report to clarify that the bill does not in any way modify, alter or amend any border enforcement authority. Finally, the rule provides one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

Mr. Speaker, the bill before us today, H.R. 324, designates the Santa Cruz Valley region of southern Arizona as a National Heritage Area. The Santa Cruz Valley is one of America's longest inhabited regions, with traces of human occupation extending back more than 12,000 years. The region was at the center of centuries of Native American cultural history. It also served as a corridor of Spanish exploration, colonization, missionary activity, as well as a frontier of Mexican and early American mining, ranching and agriculture.

The heritage area includes two national parks, two national historic trails, four State parks, six county parks, four major lakes, two designated scenic highways, and hundreds of miles of back-country trails and urban bike-ways. It also includes 32 museums, 28 districts, 102 individual buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places, as well as dozens of prehistoric and historic archaeological sites. A July 2005 study by the Center for Desert Archaeology, on which the bill is based, examined the many resources in the region. The National Park Service reviewed the study and found that the area meets the 10 criteria for proposed heritage areas.

Designating the Santa Cruz Valley as a heritage area allows the Park Service to support the State and local conservation efforts through Federal recognition, seed money and technical assistance. This simply means that local groups will have the resources they need to educate the public about the historic, cultural and natural value of the area.

I would like to commend my good friends, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GRIJALVA) and the gentlewoman from Arizona (Ms. GIFFORDS), for bringing this legislation to the floor today so that we can ensure that America's history and natural wonderment is protected for future generations.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

I rise today to urge my colleagues to vote against the rule for the bill H.R. 324, the Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area Act, a bill that has already failed when it was offered under suspension earlier this month.

It disappoints me to have to come here and urge opposition to this rule for a bill offered by my colleague Congressman GRIJALVA. However, there are many reasons to oppose this bill coming to the floor. The bill failed by a vote of 249-145 just 2 weeks ago. It is a