

could say to himself, you know, I think I can change this. And then not only did he think that; he went out and he did it. And I think that's really why a gold medal for Dr. Yunus is such an important part for us to remember in the Congress.

We often think that, you know, we've got to give \$100 million or \$80 billion or whatever. This man started with \$27 and created something that has affected millions and millions of people.

The last thing I want to say is that it's affected the lives of women. Women in the world, their status clearly is below that of men in most countries. But the access to credit for these women of Bangladesh gave them the ability to begin to develop a little business, and accumulate a little capital, and then to buy some school uniforms for their children and pay their school fees. Any country that educates their women, begins to educate the children, begins the development of a country. And Dr. Yunus knew that, that if he could give women a chance to have access to credit—a lot of people laughed at him—but a 97 percent payback rate will match Citibank any day of the week. And this is the work of a man who had an idea and proved that if you have an idea and you are willing to work and believe in people, you can make it work.

So it's a great honor to have a chance to say a few words about Muhammad Yunus. He is a great man, and a gold medal is little enough to give him.

□ 1830

Mr. CARSON of Indiana. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS).

(Mr. DAVIS of Illinois asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. CARSON) for yielding time. I also want to commend my good friend Representative HOLT from New Jersey and the Senator from my State, Senator DURBIN, for the work that they have done in advancing this recognition and advancing this legislation. I don't think that there is any doubt in anybody's mind that Professor Yunus is deserving of such an honor. But it's not really just about honoring Professor Yunus. It's really about advancing the concept that he created, micro-lending, that not only has been a boon to underdeveloped nations, some of the millions of people who live in poverty each and every day of their lives wondering how they're going to be able to etch their way out of it; but we also see it in our country, in the United States of America, where just today we increased the limits on our micro-lending program through the Small Business Administration in the bill that we passed earlier from \$35,000 to \$50,000.

I grew up in rural America, where if an individual could gather a thousand

dollars, they could purchase themselves a load of vegetables, and rather than just having a few to get rid of, they really could get rid of quite a few. There is a woman in the basement of the building where my district office is located. She operates a small belt-making, jewelry-making shop. Five thousand dollars was enough to get her started and now she actually has a thriving business where she earns a living and employs two or three other people. Not far from where I live is the number one shoeshine shop in America. As a matter of fact, it's called Shine King. It's no bigger than just a little opening. But the man who started it actually started shining shoes with a kit on the streets and now, of course, he's part owner of the bank around the corner, he owns real estate, he is a member of the Chamber of Commerce. He provides training and work opportunities for young boys. As a matter of fact, the famed basketball player, Isiah Thomas, used to shine shoes in his shop.

And so microlending is actually the beginning for millions of people. I join with my colleagues in honoring Dr. Yunus, again commend all of them for advancing this legislation, look forward to its passage but look more forward to greater utilization of the microlending concept as a part of the American economy.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Senate bill before us today, which would award Dr. Muhammad Yunus a gold medal for his exceptional work in the field of micro-finance assistance to the most impoverished people around the world.

As this measure notes, Dr. Yunus first tested his belief thirty-four years ago that very small-scale, low-interest loans to the "poorest of the poor" could have a major and positive impact on their lives.

He leant \$27 of his own money to 42 craftsmen and craftswomen in a small village in Bangladesh.

He went on to establish the Grameen Bank, which created a model for providing on a larger-scale what we now commonly know as micro-enterprise loans.

Today, it is estimated that such assistance—which is low-cost, targeted to those most in need, and expected to be repaid by its recipients so that it can be used again and again to help others—has positively impacted the lives of over 150 million people around the world.

Dr. Yunus has shown us that innovative thinking such as this can result in major beneficial changes for those around the world who survive on less than one or two dollars a day in income.

He has also shown that we don't always need to think in terms of huge amounts of assistance—or expensive agencies and contractors—to carry out such important work.

In many cases, communities assisted by micro-loans are asked to set up groups that help to oversee and manage the loan programs, and they work not only to ensure repayment of the loans but also to give an important sense of community engagement in the effort.

Therefore, micro-loans help provide long-term, sustainable change and are not just a one-time deal with a disappearing impact.

We need more such low-cost innovations, especially now that we all face a global economic crisis and a growing budget crisis here at home.

Madam Speaker, Dr. Yunus was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for his efforts to promote micro-finance.

I believe that the Congress as well should award a gold medal to Dr. Yunus.

I am pleased to be the lead co-sponsor, with my colleague, Mr. HOLT, of the House version of this bill, which today has the support of 297 cosponsors.

In closing, I want to again express my support for the passage of this bill, which would honor not just Dr. Yunus, but also those who work hard to find new, innovative and low-cost ways to help those most in need.

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

Mr. CARSON of Indiana. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. CARSON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 846.

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.

BORDER PROTECTION APPOINTMENT ACT

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendment to the bill (H.R. 1517) to allow certain U.S. Customs and Border Protection employees who serve under an overseas limited appointment for at least 2 years, and whose service is rated fully successful or higher throughout that time, to be converted to a permanent appointment in the competitive service.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the Senate amendment is as follows:

Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert:

SECTION 1. DEFINITIONS.

For purposes of this Act—

(1) the term "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection;

(2) the term "U.S. Customs and Border Protection" means U.S. Customs and Border Protection of the Department of Homeland Security;

(3) the term "competitive service" has the meaning given such term by section 2102 of title 5, United States Code; and

(4) the term "overseas limited appointment" means an appointment under—

(A) subpart B of part 301 of title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations, as in effect on January 1, 2008; or

(B) any similar antecedent or succeeding authority, as determined by the Commissioner.

SEC. 2. AUTHORITY TO CONVERT CERTAIN OVERSEAS LIMITED APPOINTMENTS TO PERMANENT APPOINTMENTS.

(a) *IN GENERAL.*—Notwithstanding chapter 33 of title 5, United States Code, or any other provision of law relating to the examination, certification, and appointment of individuals in the competitive service, the Commissioner may convert an employee serving under an overseas limited appointment within U.S. Customs and Border Protection to a permanent appointment in the competitive service within U.S. Customs and Border Protection, if—

(1) as of the time of conversion, the employee has completed at least 2 years of current continuous service under 1 or more overseas limited appointments; and

(2) the employee's performance has, throughout the period of continuous service referred to in paragraph (1), been rated at least fully successful or the equivalent.

An employee whose appointment is converted under the preceding sentence acquires competitive status upon conversion.

(b) INDEMNIFICATION AND PRIVILEGES.—

(1) *INDEMNIFICATION.*—The United States shall, in the case of any individual whose appointment is converted under subsection (a), indemnify and hold such individual harmless from any claim arising from any event, act, or omission—

(A) that arises from the exercise of such individual's official duties, including by reason of such individual's residency status, in the foreign country in which such individual resides at the time of conversion;

(B) for which the individual would not have been liable had the individual enjoyed the same privileges and immunities in the foreign country as an individual who either was a permanent employee, or was not a permanent resident, in the foreign country at the time of the event, act, or omission involved; and

(C) that occurs before, on, or after the date of the enactment of this Act, including any claim for taxes owed to the foreign country or a subdivision thereof.

(2) SERVICES AND PAYMENTS.—

(A) *IN GENERAL.*—In the case of any individual whose appointment is converted under subsection (a), the United States shall provide to such individual (including any dependents) services and monetary payments—

(i) equivalent to the services and monetary payments provided to other U.S. Customs and Border Protection employees in similar positions (and their dependents) in the same country of assignment by international agreement, an exchange of notes, or other diplomatic policy; and

(ii) for which such individual (including any dependents) was not eligible by reason of such individual's overseas limited appointment.

(B) *APPLICABILITY.*—Services and payments under this paragraph shall be provided to an individual (including any dependents) to the same extent and in the same manner as if such individual had held a permanent appointment in the competitive service throughout the period described in subsection (a)(1).

(c) *GUIDANCE ON IMPLEMENTATION.*—The Commissioner shall implement the conversion of an employee serving under an overseas limited appointment to a permanent appointment in the competitive service in a manner that—

(1) meets the operational needs of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection; and

(2) to the greatest extent practicable, is not disruptive to the employees affected under this Act.

SEC. 3. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.

Nothing in this Act shall be construed to affect the pay of any individual for services performed by such individual before the date of the conversion of such individual.

SEC. 4. TERMINATION.

The authority of the Commissioner to convert an employee serving under an overseas limited

appointment within U.S. Customs and Border Protection to a permanent appointment in the competitive service within U.S. Customs and Border Protection shall terminate on the date that is 2 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. THOMPSON) and the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. ROGERS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Mississippi.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the motion to concur in the Senate amendment to H.R. 1517 and yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 1517 would allow the U.S. Customs and Border Protection to correct an employee classification error affecting a few CBP personnel currently serving overseas. Decades ago, the Immigration and Naturalization Service hired a few people, on a temporary, part-time basis, to work in pre-clearance operations at ports in Ireland, Aruba and the Bahamas. Over the past 20 years, their work evolved into full-time, permanent jobs. However, due to a technical issue, it turns out that their positions fell into a "gray area."

Though long-term CBP staff, they are ineligible for permanent U.S. civil service positions and, by extension, are not conferred the protections and immunities afforded to permanent CBP employees in the U.S. Additionally, this situation puts CBP in violation of a U.S. agreement with Ireland, ratified after these individuals were hired, which requires all pre-clearance employees to be permanent employees.

CBP, the Office of Personnel Management, and the Department of State have tried to resolve this matter but congressional action is necessary.

H.R. 1517 grants the CBP commissioner the authority to convert the positions of 24 overseas employees to full-time, permanent civil service positions. This action is not without precedent. It has been done before at the IRS and the Library of Congress. Without this legislation, these long-term CBP employees may face termination and CBP would lose the benefit of their expertise.

Going forward, it is our hope that the commissioner will take the histories of these dedicated individuals into account when determining their futures. H.R. 1517 directs the commissioner to make conversion decisions based on CBP's operational needs and in a man-

ner that, to the extent practicable, does not disrupt these workers. It was introduced by Representative Elliot Engel and the ranking member of my committee, Peter King. The House passed the bill last December and the Senate did so last month with minor changes. Passage today will clear the bill for the President's signature.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill that remedies a discrete personnel issue that jeopardizes the continued employment of a cadre of U.S. citizens who provide a valuable border security service to our country.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1840

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may assume.

I rise in support of H.R. 1517, to grant special 2-year authority to the Commissioner of Customs and Border Protection, CBP, to correct a mistake in the hiring appointment for certain CBP employees stationed overseas at the pre-inspection posts. This corrective action will ensure CBP is able to keep trained officers stationed in key overseas positions.

This bill provides authority to CBP to noncompetitively convert employees mistakenly hired under an overseas limited appointment to permanent status. This action will correct the employment category and protect their Federal benefits and retirement.

There are approximately 35 employees in Ireland, Aruba, Bermuda, the Bahamas, and Canada affected by this hiring error. Without legislative authority, the employees will be required to convert to locally hired staff or return to the U.S. and compete for domestic CBP jobs.

These employees have been working between 6 and 15 years in their overseas posts to ensure that travelers coming to the U.S. do not pose a threat. The CBP officers in these posts work in the pre-clearance program which deploys CBP officers at select overseas airports to conduct entry-level inspections before planes depart foreign soil for the U.S.

Through no fault of their own, these employees are now facing problems with their employment status due to a mistake made years ago when they were initially hired. With the passage of this legislation, we can fix this error and ensure that the employees continue their work and maintain their level of pay and benefits.

The development and consideration of this legislation was bipartisan from the beginning, and I would like to thank the bill's sponsors, Congressman ENGEL and Ranking Member KING, for introducing the bill, and Chairman THOMPSON for his support in moving the bill out of the committee.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill and send it to the President in a timely manner.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, the CBP employees affected by H.R. 1517 work every day to help secure our Nation's borders. Retaining their expertise at overseas ports is the right thing to do for them and for DHS. Therefore, I strongly encourage my colleagues to join me in supporting this important legislation.

Mr. ENGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of my legislation, H.R. 1517, the Conversion of Certain Overseas Customs and Border Protection, CBP, Employees. I would also like to give special recognition to my New York colleague, Representative KING, for the hard work that he has put into this legislation.

H.R. 1517 would grant the Commissioner of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection the authority to non-competitively convert employees serving on overseas limited appointments into permanent employees. The need for this legislation was brought to my attention by fifteen U.S. CBP employees serving at pre-clearance centers in Ireland, who were incorrectly hired by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. These employees were hired on overseas temporary appointments, but the work requirement evolved into a permanent basis.

There are two ways for a Federal agency to fill permanent overseas positions: (1) By hiring locally engaged staff, LES, and/or (2) by U.S. direct hire. Yet, because an agreement between the United States and Ireland requires that all pre-clearance employees be "permanent" employees, and by definition employees on overseas appointments are "limited" employees (albeit in this case, limited for an indefinite duration), CBP is in violation of the two countries' agreement. More troubling to me, the fifteen employees on overseas limited appointments are not covered by the protections and immunities afforded by the agreement to "permanent" U.S. pre-clearance employees.

Later, I learned the number of employees in similar positions included over thirty other CBP employees in Aruba, the Bahamas, Bermuda, and Canada. It has been through no fault of their own that these loyal employees, some who have been protecting our country for almost twenty years, are now in employment limbo. Without this legislation, they will have to either become Locally Engaged Staff, who are compensated by and receive benefits from the Irish Government, or be placed into competitive positions that will require a return to the U.S. Either choice would destroy an established way of life in Ireland or an established career with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection. H.R. 1517 would allow these employees to stay close to their families and keep their positions protecting our country.

I would like to applaud the House Homeland Security Committee for including language encouraging the CBP Commissioner not to be too disruptive to the employees when implementing this legislation. I recognize the standard CBP policy is for employees serving at overseas positions to rotate back to the U.S. after five years. However, in this extreme circumstance it would be best for the CBP to allow the employees to continue to serve where they are currently, with the years of experience they bring to their positions.

H.R. 1517 is a bipartisan bill. It is supported by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection

and the National Treasury Employees Union, which represents the employees. Each has had the opportunity for input into the final legislation.

I would strongly encourage my colleagues to join with me in support of this bipartisan legislation. Continued employment of these individuals is in the best interest of CBP as the work requirement remains and is critical to CBP protecting our Nation's borders.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. THOMPSON) that the House suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendment to the bill, H.R. 1517.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the Senate amendment was concurred in.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1618) urging the Federal Government, States, localities, schools, nonprofit organizations, businesses, other entities, and the people of the United States to observe National Preparedness Month, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1618

Whereas it has been 9 years since the horrific terrorist attacks against the United States and its people on September 11, 2001;

Whereas terrorists around the world continue to plot and plan attacks against the United States and its interests and foreign allies, and the Department of Homeland Security has stated that the number and pace of attempted attacks against the United States over the past 9 months have surpassed the number of attempts during any other previous one-year period;

Whereas during the month of September the Nation observes National Preparedness Month, which is sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security, and encourages all citizens to prepare themselves and their families for possible emergencies by getting an emergency supply kit that will last 72 hours, making a family emergency plan, being informed, and getting involved in the community in organizations such as Citizen Corps, which actively involves citizens in making our communities and our Nation safer, stronger, and better prepared;

Whereas acts of terrorism can exact a tragic human toll, resulting in significant numbers of casualties and disrupting hundreds of thousands of lives, causing serious damage to our Nation's critical infrastructure, and inflicting billions of dollars of costs on both our public and private sectors;

Whereas in response to the attacks of September 11, 2001, and the continuing grave threat of terrorism, Congress established the Department of Homeland Security in March 2003, bringing together 22 disparate Federal entities, enhancing their capabilities with major new divisions emphasizing terrorism-related information analysis, infrastructure

protection, and science and technology, and focusing their employees on the critical mission of defending our Nation against acts of terrorism;

Whereas the Secretary of Homeland Security is charged with coordinating the implementation of preparedness in the United States under Homeland Security Presidential Directive-8, and has undertaken efforts to prepare the Nation with public awareness campaigns, including National Preparedness Month activities;

Whereas since its creation, the employees of the Department of Homeland Security have endeavored to carry out this mission with commendable dedication, working with other Federal intelligence and law enforcement agencies and partners at all levels of government to help secure our Nation's borders, airports, seaports, critical infrastructure, and communities against terrorist attacks;

Whereas our Nation's firefighters, law enforcement officers, emergency medical personnel, and other first responders selflessly and repeatedly risk their lives to fulfill their new mission of helping to prevent, protect against, and prepare to respond to acts of terrorism, major disasters, and other emergencies;

Whereas State, local, territorial, and tribal government officials, the private sector, and ordinary citizens across the country have been working in cooperation with the Department of Homeland Security and other Federal Government agencies to enhance our ability to prevent, deter, protect against, and prepare to respond to acts of terrorism;

Whereas all people of the United States can assist in promoting our Nation's overall terrorism and emergency preparedness by remaining vigilant and alert, reporting suspicious activity to proper authorities, and preparing themselves and their families for potential terrorist attacks; and

Whereas all people of the United States should take the opportunity during National Preparedness Month in September 2010 to take steps at home, work, and school to enhance their ability to assist in preventing, protecting against, and preparing to respond to acts of terrorism: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) commends the public servants of the Department of Homeland Security and other Federal agencies for their outstanding contributions to our Nation's homeland security;

(2) salutes the dedication of State, local, territorial, and tribal government officials, the private sector, and citizens across the country for their efforts to enhance the Nation's ability to prevent, deter, protect against, and prepare to respond to potential acts of terrorism;

(3) expresses the Nation's appreciation for the sacrifices and commitment of our law enforcement and emergency response personnel in preventing and preparing to respond to acts of terrorism;

(4) supports the goals and ideals of National Preparedness Month as they relate to the threat of terrorism; and

(5) urges the Federal Government, States, localities, schools, nonprofit organizations, businesses, other entities, and the people of the United States to observe National Preparedness Month with appropriate events and activities that promote citizen and community preparedness to respond to acts of terrorism.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. THOMPSON) and the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. ROGERS) each will control 20 minutes.