

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, non-profit 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.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Mississippi.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material on the measure 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 yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of House Resolution 1618. I am pleased that House Resolution 1618 is being considered by the full House today during National Preparedness Month. I would like to thank Ranking Member KING, as well as Representatives RICHARDSON and ROGERS, the chairwoman and ranking member of the Subcommittee on Emergency Communications, Preparedness, and Response, for their support of this resolution and joining me as House congressional co-chairs for National Preparedness Month.

House Resolution 1618 commends the public servants at the Department of Homeland Security for their outstanding dedication to securing our Nation and encourages the American public to participate in National Preparedness Month.

National Preparedness Month is sponsored by DHS. Spearheaded by FEMA's Ready campaign and Citizen Corps program, National Preparedness Month is designed to encourage Americans to take simple steps to prepare for emergencies in their homes, businesses, and communities. This year, the Ready Campaign has partnered with over 4,000 coalition members across the country to promote the message that preparedness is a shared responsibility.

As a former volunteer firefighter, I know that lives are saved when the public takes steps to prepare for the worst. Individuals across the country can be more prepared for the next disaster by making a family emergency plan, assembling an emergency supply kit and learning about possible threats in their area. Businesses, both large and small, should also make every effort to plan for disasters by conducting a risk assessment, completing a business continuity plan, and preparing an evacuation plan that takes into account the needs of all their employees, including those with disabilities.

We are up to our 12th named storm during this hurricane season, and according to the DHS, the number of attempted terrorist attacks against the U.S. over the last 9 months has surpassed the number of attempts during any other previous 1-year period.

The good news is that today we are more prepared to respond to disasters than at any other time in our history, as we have a stronger FEMA and better

equipped first responders standing ready across the country.

Despite all the effort that has gone into building a more secure and resilient Nation, more work needs to be done. In a survey conducted in 2009, FEMA found that just 56 percent of respondents had disaster supply kits in their homes and only 38 percent knew where to find key public safety information. It is my great hope that National Preparedness Month will help improve these numbers.

I urge my colleagues to support House Resolution 1618 and also ask them to encourage their constituents to visit ready.gov where they can learn how to be vigilant, alert, and prepared for any emergency.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

I rise today as an original cosponsor of House Resolution 1618. This bipartisan resolution recognizes the month of September as National Preparedness Month, during which government officials, the private sector, and individual citizens are urged to become better prepared for terrorist attacks, natural disasters, and other emergencies.

Earlier this month, we commemorated the ninth anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and honored those who were lost that day. Weeks earlier we marked the fifth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, and we were reminded of the lasting devastation caused by the storm.

These solemn anniversaries are powerful reminders of the threats we face and the importance of being prepared. Having an emergency kit, which includes basic supplies such as water, nonperishable foods, flashlights, batteries and other items, developing an emergency evacuation plan for your family, and staying informed about what's going on in your local area, are all steps that can be taken to become more prepared.

In addition to promoting these steps, House Resolution 1618 commends the employees of the Department of Homeland Security; other Federal agencies; State, local, and tribal government officials; as well as emergency responders and law enforcement officers who defend our Nation against terrorism. Their dedication to protecting our homeland against threats is one that we cannot and must not take for granted.

For this reason I have been a strong advocate of the Federal grant programs such as the FIRE and SAFER programs, which provide direct and much-needed support to our Nation's firefighters for equipment, staffing, and many other needs.

The Center for Domestic Preparedness in my home district of Anniston, Alabama, is another prime example of the Federal Government's commitment to first responders, providing premier hands-on training in disaster prepared-

ness and response at no cost to the State, local, and tribal emergency responders.

These types of Federal initiatives help ensure that we do our part in providing the men and women on the front lines with the resources necessary to carry out their vital missions. I hope that we will continue to enhance funding for these programs, which also have the tremendous benefit of promoting a higher level of coordination and planning across all levels of government.

I want to thank Chairman THOMPSON and Subcommittee Chairwoman RICHARDSON for their work on this resolution. As a House co-chair of National Preparedness Month, I urge all of my colleagues to support the measure.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. RICHARDSON).

□ 1850

Ms. RICHARDSON. Madam Speaker, as subcommittee chair of the Emergency Communications, Preparedness, and Response Subcommittee of the Committee on Homeland Security and one of the cochairs of the House National Preparedness Month and original cosponsors of H.R. 1618, I rise in strong support of this resolution brought forward by Chairman THOMPSON recognizing the importance of National Preparedness Month.

I would like to thank Chairman THOMPSON and Ranking Member KING of our full committee for their continued leadership on these very important issues and not letting Americans be caught unprepared. I would also like to acknowledge Mr. ROGERS, the gentleman from Alabama, the ranking member of our subcommittee, for working with me on these preparedness issues, as well as all of the members of our committee who supported this resolution.

September 2010 is the seventh annual National Preparedness Month. Through events, public service announcements, and other coordinated efforts, FEMA and its thousands of public and private partners have and will disseminate critical information about the importance of being prepared.

House Resolution 1618 supports these important efforts by recognizing the valuable work of the Department of Homeland Security and encouraging Americans to work together to take concrete actions toward emergency preparedness.

Over the course of the last year, we have seen tragedies strike, whether it was manmade or beyond our control, in many forms, whether they included floods, wildfires, earthquakes, hurricanes, oil spills, and most recently in my own State, a major pipeline gas explosion. Additionally, we have also known terrorists continue to target Americans and our critical infrastructure, as evidenced by the various attempted suicide bombings and plots that have been uncovered.

Thanks to countless public servants and everyday Americans throughout all levels of government and first responders across our country, our Nation stands more resilient than ever. House Resolution 1618 praises the selfless dedication of those courageous individuals and calls on the American public to equally make efforts at home, at work and school, because it's really all of our responsibility to increase their ability to assist in preventing, protecting against, and preparing to respond to all disasters and, above all, to minimize the loss of life and destruction of property.

Madam Speaker, change is evident in regard to how Americans prepare for disasters, but one thing is completely true—we have not completely hit the road that we need to be on to be prepared in every aspect to avoid some of these disasters and incidents that might occur.

Let me go over a few simple tips, and I would like to build upon some of the ones that Chairman THOMPSON already mentioned for the RECORD.

Number one, it's important to practice your disaster plan. Number two, prepare our children so that they know what to do. Number three, something that we fell short on with Hurricane Katrina, and that is not to forget to make assistance for those who are vulnerable, whether they be those who are aged, infants, or those with special needs. We should all learn CPR and first aid. We need to understand the post-9/11 risks. And finally, we all have got to be involved and volunteer.

House Resolution 1618 encourages all Americans to be prepared when—not if—the next emergency occurs and to get involved in the National Preparedness Month activity happening in your area. Right here today in the Capitol, Chairman THOMPSON authorized, with FEMA, to be able to launch the iPod system, which will enable State and local governments, tribal and territories to be able to be better alerted in the case of an emergency.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting H. Res. 1618.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Madam Speaker, House Resolution 1618 supports the important goals and ideals of National Preparedness Month. I thank the ranking member and all my colleagues on the Committee on Homeland Security for coming together in a bipartisan manner to show support for this important resolution.

I urge all my colleagues to support this resolution.

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 agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1618.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. WOOLSEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

NATIONAL ALCOHOL AND DRUG ADDICTION RECOVERY MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I rise to acknowledge and recognize National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month.

Madam Speaker, the use and abuse of illegal, illicit, and contraband drugs is one of the most challenging and difficult problems facing America. Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month brings attention to the broad group of people affected by alcohol and drug abuse and how recovery truly helps people who struggle with substance abuse problems.

The 2007 National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that just over 22 million Americans, or 9 percent of the population aged 12 or older, were classified with substance dependence or abuse in the past year. This rate has remained fairly stable since 2002. Approximately 57 percent of persons who are dependent on drugs were dependent on marijuana, with about 25 percent dependent on pain relievers and 23 percent dependent on cocaine.

Although men and women aged 12 to 17 have similar rates of drug dependence, for individuals older than 18, the rate of substance dependence or abuse was about twice as high for men compared to women. Racial/ethnic groups reported similar rates of dependence or abuse, except Asian Americans reported lower rates of dependence and abuse.

Substance dependence or abuse varies by region of the country, with the Midwest, 10 percent, having a higher rate than the South, 8.7 percent, and the Northeast, 8.1 percent, but a similar rate to the West, 9.2 percent.

Rates for substance dependence or abuse among persons aged 12 or older in 2007 also varied by county type, with small metropolitan counties, 9.4 percent, having a significantly higher rate than nonmetropolitan counties, 8.3 percent, but a similar rate when compared with large metropolitan counties, 9.0 percent.

In Illinois, according to the 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 780,000 Illinois citizens aged 12 or older reported illicit drug use, with 294,000 Il-

linoisans reporting drug dependence or abuse in the past year.

□ 1900

These data found that, for youth aged 12-17, approximately 104,000 Illinoisans reported past month use of an illicit drug.

Earlier in this decade, a survey in Chicago found that 800,000 individuals indicated that they used drugs, with 300,000 reporting themselves as hardcore drug users.

A 2010 study by the Illinois Consortium on Drug Policy found that the Chicago metropolitan region ranks among the worst in the nation for heroin use and problems associated with heroin use. Chicago had the most cases of people with heroin problems using emergency rooms in the Nation from 2004 to 2008, 50 percent more than were handled in New York City during the same period.

So I rise in essence to also commend those institutions and those individuals who are engaged in the treatment of substance abuse users, and I point out the Loretta Hospital, which is located in the congressional district where I live and work, I had the opportunity to attend on Monday of this week a great program composed of individuals who were substance abuse users, providers of care, the members of the police department, and I pointed out that the Chicago Police Department in that particular district has a commendable record of how they handle individuals that they come into contact with when they are inebriated, when they are suffering from alcoholism, when they might be found wandering on the street in states that require some intervention.

I also note that on Saturday, there will be at least 500 to 800 individuals involved in what we call Recovery Walk. That is individuals who are all addicted who will gather in a park for a rally and then walk to another park, pointing out the tremendous need for additional resources but also pointing out that treatment and recovery does in fact work.

So I want to commend all of the individuals who have suffered from substance abuse, alcohol and drug use, and have overcome their difficulties and are now leading meaningful and productive lives.

I also commend all of those who are involved in treatment who know that if they continue to believe, if they continue to hope, that they can overcome this difficulty.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. POE of Texas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.