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AUTHORIZING USE OF CAPITOL ROTUNDA FOR 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF KENNEDY INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and concur in the concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 75) authorizing the use of the rotunda of the Capitol for an event marking the 50th anniversary of the inaugural address of President John F. Kennedy.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

S. CON. RES. 75

Whereas John Fitzgerald Kennedy was elected to the United States House of Representatives and served from January 3, 1947, to January 3, 1953, until he was elected by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to the Senate where he served from January 3, 1953, to December 22, 1960;

Whereas on November 8, 1960, John Fitzgerald Kennedy was elected as the 35th President of the United States; and

Whereas on January 20, 1961, President Kennedy was sworn in as President of the United States and delivered his inaugural address at 12:51pm, a speech that served as a clarion call to service for the Nation: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring),

SECTION 1. USE OF THE ROTUNDA OF THE CAPITOL FOR AN EVENT HONORING PRESIDENT KENNEDY.

The rotunda of the United States Capitol is authorized to be used on January 20, 2011, for a ceremony in honor of the 50th anniversary of the inaugural address of President John F. Kennedy. Physical preparations for the conduct of the ceremony shall be carried out in accordance with such conditions as may be prescribed by the Architect of the Capitol.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) and the gentleman from California (Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. DAVIS of California. 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 matter on the measure now under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, this Senate concurrent resolution authorizes use of the Capitol rotunda on January 20, 2011, for a ceremony commemorating the 50th anniversary of President Kennedy's inaugural address. In that speech half a century ago, the President urged our country forward with words that still apply today, particularly as we close one session of Congress and start another.

President Kennedy said, "So let us begin anew—remembering on both

sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof. Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate. Let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belaboring those problems which divide us."

Madam Speaker, I am sincerely looking forward to this commemorative ceremony. I know of no controversy to this measure and urge my colleagues to support Senate Concurrent Resolution 75.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of S. Con. Res. 75, authorizing use of the rotunda of the Capitol for an event in January marking the 50th anniversary of the inaugural address of President John F. Kennedy.

Madam Speaker, Presidential inaugural addresses are always historic and are often some of the most memorable events during different eras of our country's history.

We can recall Abraham Lincoln's inaugural address in 1861, President Franklin Roosevelt's inaugural address in 1933, and President Ronald Reagan's inaugural address in 1981, among many others, as addresses that inspired this Nation at particular moments of importance.

In 1961, President Kennedy's inaugural address rightly challenged us to ask what we could do for our country and not what our country could do for us. As people across this land did 50 years ago, so we must continue to do now. We must ask ourselves how we can best contribute to our society—by providing for our families, by participating in our communities, in civil society, in our children's schools, and by looking at the lives and needs intimately and immediately around us and seeking to meet them.

Some were then, and some may now, be also called to use their skills and services in our military, diplomatic, and public service sectors. Self-government needs all these attributes and contributions, and President Kennedy's address boldly challenged us to meet them.

Madam Speaker, I support this resolution authorizing use of the rotunda. I, too, believe we should look for inspiration to President Kennedy's eloquent address given some 50 years ago this coming January.

As I say, I hope all will join us in supporting this resolution.

I have no other speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. I thank the gentleman for his words. I ask for an "aye" vote, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) that the House suspend the rules and concur in the concurrent resolution, S. Con. Res. 75.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXTENDING ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS' AUTHORITY TO ACCEPT AND USE FUNDS FOR EXPEDITED PERMIT PROCESSING

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6184) to amend the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 to extend and modify the program allowing the Secretary of the Army to accept and expend funds contributed by non-Federal public entities to expedite the evaluation of permits, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6184

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. FUNDING TO PROCESS PERMITS.

Section 214 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 (33 U.S.C. 2201 note; 114 Stat. 2594; 117 Stat. 1836; 119 Stat. 2169; 120 Stat. 318; 120 Stat. 3197; 121 Stat. 1067; 123 Stat. 3478) is amended—

(1) by striking subsection (a) and inserting the following:

"(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, after public notice, may accept and expend funds contributed by a non-Federal public entity to expedite the evaluation of a permit of that entity related to a project or activity for a public purpose under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Army.;"

(2) by redesignating subsection (c) as subsection (e);

(3) by striking subsection (b) and inserting the following:

"(b) EFFECT ON PERMITTING.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out this section, the Secretary shall ensure that the use of funds accepted under subsection (a) will not impact impartial decisionmaking with respect to permits, either substantively or procedurally.

"(2) IMPARTIAL DECISIONMAKING.—In carrying out this section, the Secretary shall ensure that the evaluation of permits carried out using funds accepted under this section shall—

"(A) be reviewed by—

"(i) the District Commander, or the Commander's designee, of the Corps District in which the project or activity is located; or

"(ii) the Commander of the Corps Division in which the District is located if the evaluation of the permit is initially conducted by the District Commander; and

"(B) utilize the same procedures for decisions that would otherwise be required for the evaluation of permits for similar projects or activities not carried out using funds authorized under this section.

"(c) LIMITATION ON USE OF FUNDS.—None of the funds accepted under this section shall be used to carry out a review of the evaluation of permits required under subsection (b)(2)(A).

"(d) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—The Secretary shall ensure that all final permit decisions carried out using funds authorized under this section are made available to the public, including on the Internet.;" and

(4) in subsection (e) (as redesignated) by striking "2010" and inserting "2016".

SEC. 2. COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY PAY-AS-YOU-GO ACT OF 2010.

The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, shall be determined by reference to the latest statement titled "Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation" for this Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, provided that such statement has been submitted prior to the vote on passage.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. 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.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I am pleased to rise to support H.R. 6184, a bill to extend through the end of 2016 the authority of the Secretary of the Army to accept funds from non-Federal public entities for the consideration of permits under the Clean Water Act and the Rivers and Harbor Act of 1899.

This language is modeled after language included in the Water Resources Development Act of 2010 that was favorably approved by the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure in July of this year. And while I am disappointed that the larger water resources development bill is not likely to be enacted before the end of this Congress, I support the efforts of the gentleman from Washington (Mr. LARSEN) to provide a 5-year extension of the Corps' section 214 permit review authority. The authority expires at the end of the current calendar year, and this legislation will continue the program through the end of December 2016.

Madam Speaker, I support the inclusion of several commonsense reforms to the 214 program contained in this legislation which aim at addressing the potential conflict of interest that arises when a permittee can contribute funds to a government regulatory agency for review of its permit application. As chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment, I have joined with my chairman in carefully monitoring the implementation of this authority. While it is very popular for those that have used it, there has been an ongoing concern that allowing a regulated entity to pay the costs of its regulator could affect the objectivity of that regulator.

In May of 2007, the Government Accountability Office issued a report that expressed concern with the overall implementation of this section 214 authority. This report recommended several improvements to increase the overall transparency and impartiality of Corps permit reviews conducted with outside funds.

Many of these recommendations are codified in H.R. 6184, including the requirement that any permit reviewed under the 214 program undergo a higher order review by the Corps district commander or an appropriate designee.

In addition, this legislation requires the Corps to publicly disclose, including on the Internet, copies of all final permit decisions that are reached utilizing the 214 authority. In my view, this additional level of public disclosure will provide an appropriate safeguard to ensure the integrity of the Corps' regulatory authorities, as well as the integrity of the 214 program. In carrying out this authority, the Corps should make every effort to have these records easily accessible to the general public and disclosed in a timely manner.

Finally, this legislation clarifies the original intent of the 214 program to be available only to public entities for projects that are for a public purpose.

The May 2007 GAO report highlighted one Corps district that had utilized the 214 authority to process a permit for a private development project.

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This is inconsistent with the intent of this program. The amendments made by H.R. 6184 clarify this point and ensure that only projects for a public purpose may be reviewed using this authority.

I support the passage and quick enactment of this extension, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise today in qualified support of H.R. 6184, to authorize an extension of the Army Corps of Engineers' section 214 program.

As was just described, section 214 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 allows the Army Corps of Engineers to accept and, frankly, to expend funds provided by non-Federal public entities to hire additional personnel to process regulatory permits, something that we had heard time and time again was quickly needed.

Now, most Members of this body support a permanent extension of section 214, Madam Speaker. I'm not quite sure and I've yet to understand what makes this program so different and so special that it requires temporary extensions and not just a permanent program.

So, Madam Speaker, I say that I offer qualified support of H.R. 6184 because, while this legislation is needed—and there is no doubt that it is needed—my colleague from Texas (Mr. OLSON) has offered a much better piece of legisla-

tion. Mr. OLSON's legislation, H.R. 4162, will authorize a permanent extension of the program, not a 5-year temporary patch or a temporary extension offered by this bill.

Congress has been forced to temporarily extend this program six times since it was authorized in the Water Resources Development Act of 2000. Yet the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure has heard from Members on both sides of the aisle—this is not a partisan issue—supporting a permanent extension of the section 214 program.

Again, I have heard no Member object to a permanent extension of the section 214 program. The Corps of Engineers has now the adequate experience in running the program, and recent Government Accountability Office observations concur with this assessment. Yet here we are again on the House floor, moving a temporary extension of an excellent, proven, tested program.

Authority for this program expires on December 31 of this calendar year. So, obviously, if this program were allowed to expire, the Corps would not have the ability to process permits in a timely manner as they need to.

I want to thank Representative OLSON and Representative LARSEN for their efforts on this issue.

I urge all Members to vote in favor of H.R. 6184; but I must tell you that I do wish we were passing a permanent extension of the section 214 program today, not a temporary one.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from the State of Washington (Mr. LARSEN).

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. I want to thank the chair of the Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee for helping to bring this bill to the floor, and of course I thank both sides of the aisle on the full committee for bringing this bill to the floor.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 6184. This bill extends section 214 authority of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 through 2016. It is currently authorized through December 31 of this year.

As my good friend and colleague from Florida just noted, many Members of Congress want to make this a permanent program. I am one of those Members. However, we were able to get to a point where we could move it from the annual reauthorizations that we were doing, which is why it has been reauthorized six or seven times, to a 5-year reauthorization at this point. I certainly look forward to working with Mr. OLSON in the next session of Congress to see what we can do about its permanent authorization.

This program allows local governments to fund additional U.S. Army Corps of Engineers staff time to expedite the processing of permits for infrastructure and ecosystem restoration

projects. Section 214 was enacted by Congress because the Corps of Engineers' permitting process had become cumbersome for both Corps staff and for applicants as the number of permit applications rose.

By funding additional staff to work on specific, time-intensive permits, existing Corps staff is now able to process significant permit backlogs more quickly. Funding for additional Corps staff has resulted in a reduction of permit wait times, not only for the funding entity, but for any individual organization seeking a permit. As a result, local governments are now able to move forward with infrastructure and ecosystem restoration projects in a much more timely manner.

To give you an idea as to what this has meant in Washington State, section 214 is currently being used by over 41 public agencies in 20 Corps districts. In Washington State, the city of Seattle was the first public entity in the country to develop and use this facilitated permitting process. The city has used the section 214 program for 285 projects, representing over \$1.1 billion in capital investments. Seven years of using this program has resulted in an estimated cost savings of \$10.6 million. The average review time per project has been reduced from over 808 days to an average now of 47 to 166 days.

In a region where we have to balance some of the most difficult environmental issues in the country and where we have the second highest commerce and trade area of any region in the country, section 214 is key to overcoming some permitting delays and other challenges.

So the authority granted by 214 has worked well in practice. This authority does need to be reviewed so additional staff can remain on the job without interruption. It makes several important improvements, as the subcommittee chair has noted—improvements that were suggested by the GAO—and these changes will enhance the oversight of the program.

I also want to note that this bill has the support of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Association of Port Authorities, the American Public Works Association, and the National Association of Flood & Stormwater Management Agencies.

Finally, I want to note as well that the father of this particular section of the Water Resources Development Act is our colleague BRIAN BAIRD, who has retired and is finishing out his last term in Congress. We certainly owe a debt of gratitude to our colleague Mr. BAIRD for bringing this issue up in the first place back in '98, '99 and 2000 and getting it in WRDA of 2000.

We now need to reauthorize it for 5 years and move this bill forward. I ask my colleagues to support it.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6184, as amended, a bill to amend section 214 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000, to extend the authority of the Secretary of the Army to accept

funds from non-Federal public entities for the consideration of permits under the Clean Water Act and the Rivers and Harbors Appropriation Act of 1899.

I applaud the efforts of the gentleman from Washington (Mr. LARSEN) for introducing this bill, and for his efforts to codify the recommendations of the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to avoid any potential conflicts-of-interest in the implementation of this authority.

Since its enactment, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure has been carefully monitoring the implementation of the section 214 authority. While this authority is very popular for those public entities that have used it, the Committee has expressed concern that allowing a regulated entity to contribute to the cost of its regulator has the potential to affect the objectivity of that regulator. This would be contrary to the intent of the Clean Water Act and the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, and contrary to the intent of Congress in enacting the section 214 authority.

In recognition of this concern, I requested that GAO review the Corps' implementation of the section 214 program. In May 2007, GAO released a report, *Waters and Wetlands: Corps of Engineers Needs to Ensure That Permit Decisions Made Using Funds from Nonfederal Public Entities Are Transparent and Impartial* (GAO-07-478), which demonstrated significant variability on the implementation of the section 214 program among the Corps District offices that had experience with the program. This report recommended that the Corps implement a series of measures to avoid any potential conflict of interests in carrying out its regulatory responsibilities.

Several of the concerns raised by GAO are addressed in the amendments to section 214 made by this bill.

First, H.R. 6184 amends section 214 to clarify that the Secretary may only utilize this authority for the consideration and review of permits related to projects for a public purpose.

The May 2007 GAO report noted that one Corps District had allowed a public entity to request the Corps review a private company's permit application under section 214. This is contrary to the intent of the section 214 program, which was created to allow non-Federal public entities to utilize the program to expedite the review of permits for projects for a public purpose, such as the construction of port facilities or public water supply projects.

H.R. 6184 clarifies that the Corps may not utilize the section 214 authority to consider and review permit applications for projects or activities that primarily benefit private individuals or companies. The intent of this provision is to prohibit public entities from acting as a liaison for expedited review of private development projects, which should, more appropriately, be pursued under the traditional regulatory review process.

Second, this legislation adds a new subsection to codify a "higher-order review" requirement under the section 214 program. This provision requires the Corps to have all permits considered under this expedited authority be reviewed by a more senior Corps official, such as the Corps District Commander, or his designee. This recommendation is consistent with the findings of the May 2007 GAO report, and consistent with the Corps' implementation guidance for the section 214 program.

In carrying out this "higher-order review" authority, the Corps is directed to include information on what higher-order review was undertaken in its public disclosure of permits reviewed under this authority. In addition, funds contributed under section 214 by non-Federal public entities cannot be used to carry out the higher-order review requirements of this subsection.

In addition, H.R. 6184 adds a new subsection that directs the Secretary to make all final permit decisions carried out using section 214 funds available to the public, including on the Internet. This recommendation is consistent with the findings of the May 2007 GAO report.

However, in a February 2010 follow-up report that I requested, GAO noted that the Corps had "fallen short in two significant oversight areas," including improving the transparency of decision making to the public by clearly posting public notices of funding decisions on District Internet sites.

This legislation codifies the requirement for public disclosure for each and every permit that utilizes the 214 authority. To the maximum extent practicable, the Corps should make these permit decisions easily accessible and searchable on its website.

Finally, this legislation extends the authority for the Secretary of the Army to utilize the section 214 program through December 31, 2016.

Madam Speaker, the section 214 program was established in 2000 with the goal of expediting the permitting review process for both those parties that utilize the 214 authority, and those that do not. This is a laudable goal, but one that has been elusive to date for a myriad of reasons.

The additional safeguards called for in H.R. 6184 should help reduce the potential conflicts-of-interest between the regulators and the regulated community that are inherent in allowing contributions to the regulatory review process. However, this Committee should continue to oversee the implementation of the accountability measures called for by GAO and others to ensure that use of the section 214 program does not compromise the integrity of the regulatory process and finally achieves its goals of expediting the permit review process for all.

Madam Speaker, the text of this legislation was included as part of H.R. 5892, the "Water Resources Development Act of 2010", which the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure ordered reported by voice vote on July 29, 2010. While my hope would have been to move the 214 extension as part of a broader water resources development bill, this does not seem possible in the remainder of the 111th Congress.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 6184.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, I simply would ask all of the Members to support this measure, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) that the

House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6184, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

FEDERAL BUILDINGS PERSONNEL TRAINING ACT OF 2010

Mr. CARNAHAN. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 3250) to provide for the training of Federal building personnel, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 3250

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 “Federal Buildings Personnel Training Act of 2010”.

SEC. 2. TRAINING OF FEDERAL BUILDING PERSONNEL.

(a) IDENTIFICATION OF CORE COMPETENCIES.—Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Administrator of General Services, in consultation with representatives of relevant professional societies, industry associations, and apprenticeship training providers, and after providing notice and an opportunity for comment, shall identify the core competencies necessary for Federal personnel performing building operations and maintenance, energy management, safety, and design functions to comply with requirements under Federal law. The core competencies identified shall include competencies relating to building operations and maintenance, energy management, sustainability, water efficiency, safety (including electrical safety), and building performance measures.

(b) DESIGNATION OF RELEVANT COURSES, CERTIFICATIONS, DEGREES, LICENSES, AND REGISTRATIONS.—The Administrator, in consultation with representatives of relevant professional societies, industry associations, and apprenticeship training providers, shall identify a course, certification, degree, license, or registration to demonstrate each core competency, and for ongoing training with respect to each core competency, identified for a category of personnel specified in subsection (a).

(c) IDENTIFIED COMPETENCIES.—An individual shall demonstrate each core competency identified by the Administrator under subsection (a) for the category of personnel that includes such individual. An individual shall demonstrate each core competency through the means identified under subsection (b) not later than one year after the date on which such core competency is identified under subsection (a) or, if the date of hire of such individual occurs after the date of such identification, not later than one year after such date of hire. In the case of an individual hired for an employment period not to exceed one year, such individual shall demonstrate each core competency at the start of the employment period.

(d) CONTINUING EDUCATION.—The Administrator, in consultation with representatives of relevant professional societies, industry associations, and apprenticeship training

providers, shall develop or identify comprehensive continuing education courses to ensure the operation of Federal buildings in accordance with industry best practices and standards.

(e) CURRICULUM WITH RESPECT TO FACILITY MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF HIGH-PERFORMANCE BUILDINGS.—Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Administrator, acting through the head of the Office of Federal High-Performance Green Buildings, and the Secretary of Energy, acting through the head of the Office of Commercial High-Performance Green Buildings, in consultation with the heads of other appropriate Federal departments and agencies and representatives of relevant professional societies, industry associations, and apprenticeship training providers, shall develop a recommended curriculum relating to facility management and the operation of high-performance buildings.

(f) APPLICABILITY OF THIS SECTION TO FUNCTIONS PERFORMED UNDER CONTRACT.—Training requirements under this section shall apply to non-Federal personnel performing building operations and maintenance, energy management, safety, and design functions under a contract with a Federal department or agency. A contractor shall provide training to, and certify the demonstration of core competencies for, non-Federal personnel in a manner that is approved by the Administrator.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CARNAHAN. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on S. 3250.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. CARNAHAN. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of S. 3250. This bill has bipartisan sponsorships in the Senate by Senators CARPER and COLLINS. It is the Federal Buildings Personnel Training Act. The legislation passed the Senate by unanimous consent, and it is identical to H.R. 5112, introduced by me and my Republican colleague, Representative JUDY BIGGERT of Illinois. The bill also passed out of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on a voice vote.

At a time when many people are tired of partisan gridlock here in Washington, I believe this legislation is a good example of what we can do when we work across the aisle to accomplish commonsense legislation that will safeguard taxpayer investments, will provide certainty to small business and, most importantly, will save taxpayers money.

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Madam Speaker, when we invest in our Federal facilities, we also need to invest in the people operating and maintaining them. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act included a substantial investment of \$5.5 billion apportioned to the GSA to upgrade its facilities. In order to safeguard this substantial investment, I want to ensure that GSA and other Federal agencies have the tools necessary to properly maintain and operate these buildings at their highest performance levels.

Late last year, a Government Accountability Office report found that a lack of proper expertise and training was a major challenge for the Federal Government in reaching its energy reduction goals. This legislation will fill the training gap. Most importantly, by filling the training gap, the Federal Buildings Personnel Training Act will save taxpayer dollars on operations and maintenance costs.

The Federal Government currently consumes about 2 percent of the Nation's total energy, or about \$17.5 billion in annual energy costs. The potential for cost savings here is huge. In fact, a recent study by the International Facility Management Association showed that for every dollar spent on facility management training, organizations reported receiving an average of \$3.95 in return. If we are to be responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars, in addition to investing in energy-efficient buildings, we must invest in the people maintaining those buildings so we can recoup the largest energy and cost savings possible.

This legislation will help ensure that our Federal buildings are run in a way that maximizes their performance, assuring that they retain value throughout their lifecycles and that the taxpayer investments in these properties are both protected and leveraged to reap the cost savings involved with efficient operations and management.

I want to personally thank the Republican cosponsor, my colleagues, Representative PETE SESSIONS and Representative JUDY BIGGERT, for their support throughout this process. Representative BIGGERT and I cochair the High-Performance Buildings Caucus and we have continually advocated for the Federal Government to lead by example in high-performance building practices.

I also want to give special thanks to Chairman OBERSTAR—for his long and distinguished leadership on this issue—and to Ranking Member MICA for their support to bring this bill to the floor.

Madam Speaker, I would like to insert into the RECORD a support letter from over 50 of the country's leading building professionals, manufacturers, and small businesses. They are pleased to support this legislation and are poised to provide the necessary training to achieve both public and private sector goals.