

Mr. WALDEN. Thank you, Chairman HASTINGS and Ranking Member GRIJALVA, for your support for the commonsense Central Oregon Jobs and Water Security Act.

This bill we have before us today will create jobs in central Oregon, remove government red tape. It will protect family farmers and improve both water flows and quality of water for fish and for wildlife, all without costing taxpayers one cent. We made it completely cost-neutral.

Now the city of Prineville is the county seat of Crook County. It's located in the heart of Oregon's central Oregon, and it's along the Crooked River. Crook County was among the hardest hit in the economic downturn that we have all suffered, where unemployment even today—even today—is at over 14 percent, one of the highest rates, if not the highest, in the State of Oregon.

Nonetheless, jobs and economic growth are on the rise in Crook County. Facebook recently built their first custom data center in Prineville and is currently expanding that project. Apple recently announced that it is going to build a data center there and has actually already begun construction.

Chairman HASTINGS knows well how important the technology sector can be to rural communities. Prineville is on the verge of becoming another Quincy, Washington, which is home to Yahoo, Microsoft, Dell, and others.

To pursue new economic development, however, Prineville needs more water. Roughly 20 miles upriver from Prineville sits Bowman Dam and Prineville Reservoir, a Bureau of Reclamation project, which holds 80,000 acre feet of uncontracted water, 80,000 acre feet that is just sitting there uncontracted.

This bill would allow Prineville to access roughly 6 percent of that water, or 5,100 acre feet, and the city would pay a fair market value for the water. That extra water would allow the city to tell prospective companies, hey, you can bring your business and jobs to Prineville. We now have the water that you need. That's certainty in the job market.

It would also allow the city to provide water to an additional 500 homes within the city limits, which currently the city of Prineville can't do because it has maxed out its mitigation credits. You're talking about 500 homes inside the city limits that don't have access to city water that this bill now will allow them to have access to.

Because the city would access the water through the ground and not from directly behind the dam, that extra allocation of water would increase the minimum release of water from Bowman Dam by up to 7 cubic feet per second. Now, that's a lot.

□ 1710

In dry years, particularly in the winter, this higher release requirement

could benefit fish and wildlife, including the blue-ribbon trout fishery below Bowman Dam.

This legislation also fixes a BLM error regarding the exact location of the Crooked River wild and scenic boundary line. Currently, the wildlife and scenic line runs directly over the crest of Bowman Dam. Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member GRIJALVA, let me assure there's nothing wild or scenic about the top of a dam unless you're falling over the edge of it. This is a picture of where that is. If you follow the center line of this road, that's where the current law says the wild and scenic boundary starts. We move it downriver, where it really belongs.

As a result, we create another economic opportunity for the region—development of small-scale renewable hydropower that would create roughly 50 construction jobs over the course of 2 years. This dam doesn't have hydro on it today. Adding the hydro actually improves the release of the water, making it better for the fish, and it creates new hydroenergy and construction jobs. My legislation also protects the Ochoco Irrigation District farmers and assures they will continue to operate their family-run farms for generations to come.

Finally, this bill expedites the McKay Creek project, which will result in increased water flows for redband trout and summer steelhead. This project has long been supported by the Warm Springs Tribe and the Deschutes River Conservancy. So I want to thank and commend the Warm Springs tribal leaders and tribal members for their hard work and working in partnership with me on this legislation. Their collaborative approach has really made a difference in issues in the Deschutes Basin, and we appreciate the partnership and leadership that the tribal leaders have shown.

This is a good, commonsense, job-creating bill. It's a culmination of years of collaboration between the City of Prineville, Crook County, farmers, the Warm Springs Tribes, and the Deschutes River Conservancy.

I want to thank Mayor Roppe and County Judge McCabe for their leadership in working through this process. Mayor Roppe has testified before the House Natural Resources Committee and has done an excellent job advocating for the City of Prineville. Judge McCabe has worked tirelessly on these issues to attract tech companies like Facebook and Apple to Crook County. Hopefully, with positive steps like the passage of this legislation, more companies will soon bring their jobs to Prineville and central Oregon.

So I appreciate the assistance of Ranking Member ED MARKEY, along with Ranking Member GRACE NAPOLITANO and, of course, Mr. GRIJALVA, as well as Chairman HASTINGS. Thank you again for your help in moving forward on the Central Oregon Jobs and Water Security Act. I look forward to this legislation finally becoming law.

Mr. GRIJALVA. I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, so if the gentleman is prepared to yield back.

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

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, in many respects, this bill epitomizes the problems that those of us have in the West. This is a simple boundary change to something that was designated here on the Federal level. It has taken a great deal of time, and the impacts will be great for the economy in that area.

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, this has broad support from all of the local groups and local environmental groups, as the gentleman from Oregon said. Sadly, the frustration that we continue to have when we're trying to move legislation like this to help the local job economy in these areas is that you have national groups that don't live in those areas opposing it. And that's what frustrates us, because when you get people, especially on the local level, that support this, it's frustrating when have you a national group that says, Just because we're dealing with national land, we want to have a say in all of this. A big sense of frustration for us.

So I commend my friend from Oregon for moving this legislation, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2060, 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.

### THREE KIDS MINE REMEDIATION AND RECLAMATION ACT

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2512) to provide for the conveyance of certain Federal land in Clark County, Nevada, for the environmental remediation and reclamation of the Three Kids Mine Project Site, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2512

*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 "Three Kids Mine Remediation and Reclamation Act".*

#### SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

*In this Act:*

(1) HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCE; POLLUTANT OR CONTAMINANT; RELEASE; REMEDY; RESPONSE.—

The terms “hazardous substance”, “pollutant or contaminant”, “release”, “remedy”, and “response” have the meanings respectively set forth for those terms in section 101 of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (42 U.S.C. 9601).

(2) **HENDERSON REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY.**—The term “Henderson Redevelopment Agency” means the public body, corporate and politic, known as the redevelopment agency of the City of Henderson, Nevada, established and authorized to transact business and exercise its powers in accordance with the Nevada Community Redevelopment Law (Nev. Rev. Stat. 279.382 to 279.685, inclusive).

(3) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior.

(4) **STATE.**—The term “State” means the State of Nevada.

(5) **THREE KIDS MINE FEDERAL LAND.**—The term “Three Kids Mine Federal Land” means the parcel or parcels of Federal land consisting of approximately 948 acres in sections 26, 34, 35, and 36, Township 21 South, Range 63 East, Mount Diablo Meridian, Nevada, as depicted on the map entitled “Three Kids Mine Project Area” and dated February 6, 2012.

(6) **THREE KIDS MINE PROJECT SITE.**—The term “Three Kids Mine Project Site” means the Three Kids Mine Federal Land and the adjacent approximately 314 acres of non-Federal land, together comprising approximately 1,262 acres, as depicted on the map entitled “Three Kids Mine Project Area” and dated February 6, 2012.

### SEC. 3. LAND CONVEYANCE.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Notwithstanding sections 202 and 203 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1712, 1713) and any other provision of law, as soon as practicable after fulfillment of the conditions in subsection (b), and subject to valid existing rights, the Secretary shall convey to the Henderson Redevelopment Agency all right, title, and interest of the United States in the Three Kids Mine Federal Land.

(b) **CONDITIONS.**—

(1) **DETERMINATION OF FAIR MARKET VALUE.**—The Secretary shall administratively adjust the fair market value of the Three Kids Mine Federal Land as determined pursuant to paragraph (2) by deducting from the fair market value of the Three Kids Mine Federal Land the reasonable approximate assessment, remediation and reclamation costs for the Three Kids Mine Project Area as determined pursuant to paragraph (3). The Secretary shall begin the appraisal and cost determination under paragraphs (2) and (3), respectively, not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(2) **APPRAISAL.**—The Secretary shall determine the fair market value of the Three Kids Mine Federal Land based on an appraisal without regard to any existing contamination associated with historical mining or other uses on the property and in accordance with nationally recognized appraisal standards including the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions and the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice. The Henderson Redevelopment Agency shall reimburse the Secretary for costs incurred in performing the appraisal.

(3) **REMEDIATION AND RECLAMATION COSTS.**—The Secretary shall prepare a reasonable approximate estimation of the costs to assess, remediate, and reclaim the Three Kids Mine Project Site. This estimation shall be based upon the results of a comprehensive Phase II environmental site assessment of the Three Kids Mine Project Site prepared by the Henderson Redevelopment Agency or its designee that has been approved by the State, and shall be prepared in accordance with the current version of ASTM International Standard E-2137-06 entitled “Standard Guide for Estimating Monetary Costs and Liabilities for Environmental Matters”. The Phase II environmental site assessment shall, without

limiting any additional requirements that may be required by the State, be conducted in accordance with the procedures of the current versions of ASTM International Standard E-1527-05 entitled “Standard Practice for Environmental Site Assessments: Phase I Environmental Site Assessment Process” and ASTM International Standard E-1903-11 entitled “Standard Practice for Environmental Site Assessments: Phase II Environmental Site Assessment Process”. The Secretary shall review and consider cost information proffered by the Henderson Redevelopment Agency and the State. In the event of a disagreement among the Secretary, Henderson Redevelopment Agency, and the State over the reasonable approximate estimate of costs, the parties shall jointly select one or more experts to advise the Secretary in making the final determination of such costs.

(4) **CONSIDERATION.**—The Henderson Redevelopment Agency shall pay the fair market value, if any, as determined under this subsection.

(5) **MINE REMEDIATION AND RECLAMATION AGREEMENT EXECUTED.**—The Secretary receives from the State notification, in writing, that the Mine Remediation and Reclamation Agreement has been executed. The Mine Remediation and Reclamation Agreement shall be an enforceable consent order or agreement administered by the State that—

(A) obligates a party to perform, after the conveyance of the Three Kids Mine Federal Land under this Act, the remediation and reclamation work at the Three Kids Mine Project Site necessary to complete a permanent and appropriately protective remedy to existing environmental contamination and hazardous conditions; and

(B) contains provisions determined to be necessary by the State, including financial assurance provisions to ensure the completion of such remedy.

(6) **NOTIFICATION.**—The Secretary receives from the Henderson Redevelopment Agency notification, in writing, that the Henderson Redevelopment Agency is prepared to accept conveyance of the Three Kids Mine Federal Land under this Act. Such notification must occur not later than 90 days after execution of the Mine Remediation and Reclamation Agreement referred to in paragraph (5).

### SEC. 4. WITHDRAWAL.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Subject to valid existing rights, for the 10-year period following the date of the enactment of this Act or on the date of the conveyance required by this Act, whichever is earlier, the Three Kids Mine Federal Land is withdrawn from all forms of—

(1) entry, appropriation, operation, or disposal under the public land laws;

(2) location, entry, and patent under the mining laws; and

(3) disposition under the mineral leasing, mineral materials, and the geothermal leasing laws.

(b) **EXISTING RECLAMATION WITHDRAWALS.**—Subject to valid existing rights, any withdrawal of public land for reclamation project purposes that includes all or any portion of the Three Kids Mine Federal Land for which the Bureau of Reclamation has determined that it has no further need under applicable law is hereby relinquished and revoked solely to the extent necessary to exclude from the withdrawal the land no longer needed and to allow for the immediate conveyance of the Three Kids Mine Federal Land as required under this Act.

(c) **EXISTING RECLAMATION PROJECT AND PERMITTED FACILITIES.**—Without limiting the general applicability of section 3(a), nothing in this Act shall diminish, hinder, or interfere with the exclusive and perpetual use by existing rights holders for the operation, maintenance, and improvement of water conveyance infrastructure and facilities, including all necessary ingress and egress, situated on the Three Kids Mine Federal Land that were constructed or permitted by the Bureau of Reclamation prior to the effective date of this Act.

### SEC. 5. ACEC BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT.

Notwithstanding section 203 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1717), the boundary of the River Mountains Area of Critical Environmental Concern (NVN 76884) is hereby adjusted consistent with the map entitled “Three Kids Mine Project Area” and dated February 6, 2012.

### SEC. 6. RELEASE OF THE UNITED STATES.

Upon making the conveyance under section 3, notwithstanding any other provision of law, the United States is released from any and all liabilities or claims of any kind or nature arising from the presence, release, or threat of release of any hazardous substance, pollutant, contaminant, petroleum product (or derivative of a petroleum product of any kind), solid waste, mine materials or mining related features (including tailings, overburden, waste rock, mill remnants, pits, or other hazards resulting from the presence of mining related features) at the Three Kids Mine Project Site in existence on or before the date of the conveyance.

### SEC. 7. SOUTHERN NEVADA PUBLIC LANDS MANAGEMENT ACT.

Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act of 1998 (31 U.S.C. 6901 note; Public Law 105-263) shall not apply to land conveyed under this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS) and the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GRIJALVA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on this bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start this debate by defining clearly what H.R. 2512, the Three Kids Mine Remediation and Reclamation Act, does. This bill will create jobs, clean up an abandoned mine that is the responsibility of the United States Government, and represents a tremendous win-win for all the parties involved in this effort.

The Three Kids Mine is located in Clark County, Nevada, adjacent to the City of Henderson. The mine was operated from 1916 until 1961. From 1942 to 1955, the United States Government, through the Defense Plant Corporation, owned 446 acres of the Three Kids Mine Project site. The mine site was used to produce federally owned manganese ore for national defense purposes and was leased to the U.S. until 2003 to stockpile those nodules.

The total Three Kids Mine Project area is approximately 1,262 acres and includes 948 acres of Federal lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the Bureau of Reclamation, and 314 acres of private lands that include the mill site and the former processing site.

The City of Henderson, the Henderson Redevelopment Agency, Nevada

Department of Environmental Protection, Lakemoor Development, LLC, and the Bureau of Land Management have negotiated a plan to clean up and redevelop the Three Kids Mine Project site that includes the purchase of 948 acres of Federal lands. The site is contaminated with arsenic, lead, and other heavy metals and petroleum hydrocarbons. Cost estimates for cleanup and reclamation at the site range from \$300 million to over \$1 billion. The lower cost estimates apply to onsite remediation and disposal of tailings and other minerals in the open pits if it can be accomplished without contaminating groundwater. The higher cost estimate is associated with offsite disposal of the contaminated material.

The purchase price of the Federal lands would be adjusted to reflect the actual cleanup costs of the Federal and non-Federal land where the Federal Government has environmental liability resulting from the mill, the processing facilities, and the storage of Federal-owned manganese nodules. The City of Henderson and the developer would absolve the Federal Government if any liability arises for this site.

All in all, Mr. Speaker, this is a win-win for everyone involved. The environmental problems are addressed, the abandoned mine site is reclaimed and the land redeveloped for a beneficial use—all at no cost to the American taxpayer. This should provide a framework for other abandoned mine sites that are near or adjacent to small towns in larger urban areas.

That's why this legislation is needed and that's why I urge my colleagues to support this, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

(Mr. GRIJALVA asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2512 would seek to address the abandoned Three Kids Mine in Nevada. The Three Kids Mine site is an abandoned manganese mine and mill near Las Vegas. Today, the abandoned mine has open mine pits and significant volumes of toxic manganese tailings containing arsenic, lead, and diesel fuel, which the BLM has said pose significant risks to public health, safety, and the environment. H.R. 2512 would direct the BLM to convey the Federal portions of the Three Kids Mine site to the Redevelopment Agency of the City of Henderson, Nevada, and require remediation and reclamation of the site.

We support the goals of H.R. 2512 to clean up the toxic abandoned mine site and commend the sponsors of the legislation on their innovative thinking with respect to addressing this problem; however, the estimates of the cost addressing this abandoned mine site are large and uncertain. According to the Bureau of Land Management, the cost of reclaiming and remediating this abandoned mine site is estimated to be between \$300 million and \$1.3 billion.

We continue to have concerns about who would assume responsibility for these costs should the cleanup be abandoned for any reason in the future because this legislation would release the United States from all liabilities related to the Three Kids Mine site, including under environmental laws such as the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act.

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Such a release of liability for the United States could mean that in the event that the developer is unable to complete the cleanup of the Three Kids mine, there may be no responsible party. We also have concerns about the precedent that could be set by waiving the liability of the United States for the cleanup of the site if we are trying to ensure that private entities are held responsible for cleaning up other sites.

However, while we continue to have some concerns regarding the process outlined by the legislation, we do support the goals of H.R. 2512 to reclaim this abandoned mine site, and we do not oppose the legislation.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield such time as he may consume to the author of this important piece of legislation, the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. HECK).

Mr. HECK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman and ranking member for their assistance in moving forward with this important piece of legislation. I rise in support of H.R. 2512, the Three Kids Mine Remediation and Reclamation Act of 2012, legislation I introduced with the support of the entire Nevada delegation, to address a serious environmental, public safety, and abandoned mine reclamation issue in the city of Henderson, Nevada.

The Three Kids mine is an abandoned manganese mine and mill site consisting of approximately 1,262 acres of both Federal and private lands which lie within the Henderson City limits and is literally across the street from Lake Mead Parkway where there is an increasing number of homes and businesses. The Three Kids mine was owned and operated by various parties over the years, including the United States, from approximately 1917 through 1961, and used as a storage area for Federal manganese ore reserves from the late 1950s through 2003. The project site contains numerous large, unstable sheer-cliff open pits as deep as 400 feet, huge volumes of mine overburden/tailings, mill facility remnants, and waste disposal areas. To give a sense of scale, mine overburden is 10 stories high in some areas; abandoned waste ponds are up to 60 feet deep and filled with over 1 million cubic yards of gelatinous tailings containing high concentrations of arsenic, lead, and petroleum compounds.

H.R. 2512 provides an innovative solution for cleaning up the Three Kids mine site. In its simplest form, the leg-

islation directs the Secretary of the Interior to convey the Federal lands at the project site—approximately 948 acres—at fair market value, taking into account the costs of investigating and remediating the entire site, which includes an additional 314 acres of now-private lands that were used historically in mine operations.

It is important to note that the government will receive a release of liability for cleanup of both the Federal and private lands. Under the legislation, before the Federal lands are conveyed, the State must enter into a binding consent agreement under which the cleanup of the entire project site will occur. The consent agreement must include financial assurances to ensure the completion of the remediation and reclamation of the site. The cleanup will be financed with private capital and Nevada tax increment financing at no cost to the Federal Government.

The Three Kids Mine Remediation and Reclamation Act is the result of over 4 years of work among the city of Henderson Redevelopment Agency, the Department of the Interior, the State of Nevada, and private entities. This legislation is a unique and complex public-private partnership proposal. It will finally lead to the cleanup of the Three Kids mine site at no cost to the Federal Government, while at the same time providing for economic development and the creation of as many as 3,000 jobs.

I believe that this initiative offers a viable solution for the cleanup and reclamation of the Three Kids mine and could serve as a model for other similar sites across the country.

This legislation is a win for the economy, it is a win for the environment, and it is a win for the Federal taxpayer. I encourage my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, while the precedent of waiving the liability of the United States for the cleanup and reclamation of the site is of concern, of equal concern is the fact that Henderson has grown into the site, and grown closer and closer. BLM has stated they don't have the resources to provide the money to clean the site adequately, so it just sits there.

This developer, and if the consent decree is binding, as has been indicated by the sponsor, is an opportunity. While it is not a perfect opportunity from my perspective, it is indeed an opportunity to deal with that cleanup and not just have the site sit there in perpetuity without any attention as everything else grows around it.

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

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time and urge adoption of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2512, 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.

#### LAKE THUNDERBIRD EFFICIENT USE ACT OF 2011

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3263) to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to allow the storage and conveyance of nonproject water at the Norman project in Oklahoma, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3263

*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 “Lake Thunderbird Efficient Use Act of 2011”.

#### SEC. 2. NORMAN PROJECT, OKLAHOMA.

Public Law 86–529 (74 Stat. 225) is amended by adding at the end the following:

#### “SEC. 10. LAKE THUNDERBIRD.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—If the Secretary of the Interior determines that there is enough excess capacity in the reservoir on the Little River known as ‘Lake Thunderbird’ that nonproject water can be stored in Lake Thunderbird, the Secretary of the Interior may, in accordance with the reclamation laws, amend an existing contract, or enter into 1 or more new contracts, with the Central Oklahoma Master Conservancy District for the storage and conveyance of nonproject water in Norman project facilities to augment municipal and industrial supplies for the cities served by the Central Oklahoma Master Conservancy District.

“(b) COSTS.—If any additional infrastructure is needed to enable the storage and conveyance of non-project water in Norman project facilities under subsection (a) or any other provision of this Act, the costs of constructing, operating, and maintaining the infrastructure shall be the responsibility of the non-Federal entity contracting with the Secretary of the Interior for storage and conveyance rights.”.

#### SEC. 3. EFFECT.

Nothing in this Act or an amendment made by this Act authorizes any expansion of the storage capacity of Lake Thunderbird.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS) and the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GRIJALVA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

H.R. 3263, introduced by our colleague from Oklahoma (Mr. COLE), allows the Central Oklahoma Master Conservancy District to store water purchased from Oklahoma City in Lake Thunderbird. This legislation is necessary since Federal regulations do not allow water transfers from out-of-basin areas unless Congress expressly authorizes such a transfer.

This bill specifically states that any cost associated with its enactment will be borne by the project beneficiary. It is a no-nonsense bill that will provide additional water storage during times of drought. I thank Congressman COLE for sponsoring this commonsense bill, and I urge adoption of the measure.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

As my colleague stated, H.R. 3263 authorizes storage of nonproject water in Lake Thunderbird Reservoir. The ability to store water at Lake Thunderbird Reservoir will provide reclamation and the managers with flexibility in managing the system.

The administration supports H.R. 3263, and we have heard from the tribes around the region who do not object to this legislation.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield such time as he may consume to the sponsor of this legislation, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COLE).

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I thank Chairman HASTINGS and Ranking Member MARKEY for their help in moving this legislation and also the staff of the Natural Resources Committee who have been very supportive and helpful.

I rise today in support of my legislation, H.R. 3263, the Lake Thunderbird Efficient Use Act of 2011. Lake Thunderbird is a Bureau of Reclamation project which provides municipal water to Norman, Del City, and Midwest City, all major municipalities in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area.

In recent years, the watershed that feeds Lake Thunderbird has not been able to keep that lake full. The water that remains is of poor quality and ill-suited for drinking water and recreation. Lake Thunderbird was built to provide water to a water-starved region, and this legislation would help the Bureau of Reclamation meet the original goals of this project.

The bill allows the Central Oklahoma Master Conservancy District to acquire and store water from outside of the Bureau of Reclamation system in Lake Thunderbird. Any cost associated with this action would be paid for by the conservancy district. This legislation costs Federal taxpayers nothing.

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Frankly, Mr. Speaker, in my view, this is the type of action that we should be able to take administratively; however, under current law, it requires congressional consent.

Mr. Speaker, I first initiated this legislation in the 110th Congress when central Oklahoma was in the midst of a significant drought. In July of 2011, Oklahoma recorded the driest month ever recorded by any of the 50 States since records have been kept. Central Oklahoma remains in a drought that is forecast to continue and worsen this summer.

H.R. 3263 is important to the economic growth of central Oklahoma. The Oklahoma City metropolitan area has seen tremendous growth over the past decade and has been a positive economic force at a time of great challenges to the national economy. Water must be available to support the continued growth of this region. This straightforward and commonsense legislation is an important tool to support further growth in central Oklahoma.

Mr. Speaker, again, I want to thank the chairman and the ranking member for their cooperation, and I urge my colleagues to vote “yes” on this legislation.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, if I might inquire of the chairman if he has any additional speakers.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. I have one more speaker.

Mr. GRIJALVA. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield such time as he may consume to another Member from Oklahoma, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LANKFORD).

Mr. LANKFORD. I would like to, as well, thank my colleague, TOM COLE, for his work on this. He is the one who has really sponsored this, has focused on it, has driven it through to completion. It is a very important thing for communities that are both in his district and in my district as well.

H.R. 3263 authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to simply amend an existing contract with the Central Oklahoma Master Conservancy District for the storage of nonproject water in Lake Thunderbird. It's very simple and straightforward. This bill would allow the district to augment water if the Secretary determines that there is enough excess capacity in the reservoir.

Since the summer of 2010, Oklahoma has been in a severe drought. This has seriously endangered the quality and supply of our drinking water. To address this devastating shortage, the Central Oklahoma Master Conservancy District could purchase water from Oklahoma City to supply high-quality water through the Atoka pipeline to Midwest City, Del City, and Norman. Regrettably, Congress must act before this resource can be tapped. It is imperative that we remedy the storage issues faced by these cities, and Congress shouldn't stand in the way of this.

It is amazing that it takes an act of Congress for an Oklahoma lake to buy water from another Oklahoma lake. No