

charged with two main responsibilities: to comprehensively assess the management structure and capabilities related to the Department and to make recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the management of the Department. The legislation instructs the panel to examine five broad categories:

the efficiency and effectiveness of management structure and capabilities; whether unnecessary duplication exists; the extent to which management of key homeland security missions is centralized; waste and duplication.

Mr. Speaker, this bipartisan effort will comprise this panel's work through the course of this session, which has been extensive. I want to thank Chairman MCCAUL for his efforts in dealing with these issues. I want to thank him for the bipartisan cooperation that has been there on important issues of national security. I also want to thank the ranking member for yielding his time and for his leadership on the committee.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I am in support of this legislation, and I look forward to its adoption.

I yield back the balance of my time. The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MCCAUL) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5913, 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.

JAIME ZAPATA BORDER ENFORCEMENT SECURITY TASK FORCE ACT

Mr. MCCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendment to the bill (H.R. 915) to establish a Border Enforcement Security Task Force program to enhance border security by fostering coordinated efforts among Federal, State, and local border and law enforcement officials to protect United States border cities and communities from transnational crime, including violence associated with drug trafficking, arms smuggling, illegal alien trafficking and smuggling, violence, and kidnapping along and across the international borders of the United States, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the Senate amendment is as follows:

Senate amendment:

Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Jaime Zapata Border Enforcement Security Task Force Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND DECLARATION OF PURPOSES.

Congress finds the following:

(1) The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) overriding mission is to lead a unified national effort to protect the United States. United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative agency within DHS and is charged with enforcing a wide array of laws, including laws related to securing the border and combating criminal smuggling.

(2) Mexico's northern border with the United States has experienced a dramatic surge in border crime and violence in recent years due to intense competition between Mexican drug cartels and criminal smuggling organizations that employ predatory tactics to realize their profits.

(3) Law enforcement agencies at the United States northern border also face challenges from transnational smuggling organizations.

(4) In response, DHS has partnered with Federal, State, local, tribal, and foreign law enforcement counterparts to create the Border Enforcement Security Task Force (BEST) initiative as a comprehensive approach to addressing border security threats. These multi-agency teams are designed to increase information-sharing and collaboration among the participating law enforcement agencies.

(5) BEST teams incorporate personnel from ICE, United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATFE), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the United States Coast Guard (USCG), and the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO), along with other key Federal, State and local law enforcement agencies.

(6) Foreign law enforcement agencies participating in BEST include Mexico's Secretaria de Seguridad Publica (SSP), the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

SEC. 3. BORDER ENFORCEMENT SECURITY TASK FORCE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subtitle C of title IV of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 231 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"SEC. 432. BORDER ENFORCEMENT SECURITY TASK FORCE.

"(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established within the Department a program to be known as the Border Enforcement Security Task Force (referred to in this section as 'BEST').

"(b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of BEST is to establish units to enhance border security by addressing and reducing border security threats and violence by—

"(1) facilitating collaboration among Federal, State, local, tribal, and foreign law enforcement agencies to execute coordinated activities in furtherance of border security, and homeland security; and

"(2) enhancing information-sharing, including the dissemination of homeland security information among such agencies.

"(c) COMPOSITION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF UNITS.—

"(1) COMPOSITION.—BEST units may be comprised of personnel from—

"(A) U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement;

"(B) U.S. Customs and Border Protection;

"(C) the United States Coast Guard;

"(D) other Department personnel, as appropriate

"(E) other Federal agencies, as appropriate;

"(F) appropriate State law enforcement agencies;

"(G) foreign law enforcement agencies, as appropriate;

"(H) local law enforcement agencies from affected border cities and communities; and

"(I) appropriate tribal law enforcement agencies.

"(2) ESTABLISHMENT OF UNITS.—The Secretary is authorized to establish BEST units in jurisdictions in which such units can contribute to

BEST missions, as appropriate. Before establishing a BEST unit, the Secretary shall consider—

"(A) whether the area in which the BEST unit would be established is significantly impacted by cross-border threats;

"(B) the availability of Federal, State, local, tribal, and foreign law enforcement resources to participate in the BEST unit;

"(C) the extent to which border security threats are having a significant harmful impact in the jurisdiction in which the BEST unit is to be established, and other jurisdictions in the country; and

"(D) whether or not an Integrated Border Enforcement Team already exists in the area in which the BEST unit would be established.

"(3) DUPLICATION OF EFFORTS.—In determining whether to establish a new BEST unit or to expand an existing BEST unit in a given jurisdiction, the Secretary shall ensure that the BEST unit under consideration does not duplicate the efforts of other existing interagency task forces or centers within that jurisdiction.

"(d) OPERATION.—After determining the jurisdictions in which to establish BEST units under subsection (c)(2), and in order to provide Federal assistance to such jurisdictions, the Secretary may—

"(1) direct the assignment of Federal personnel to BEST, subject to the approval of the head of the department or agency that employs such personnel; and

"(2) take other actions to assist Federal, State, local, and tribal entities to participate in BEST, including providing financial assistance, as appropriate, for operational, administrative, and technological costs associated with the participation of Federal, State, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies in BEST.

"(e) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date on which BEST is established under this section, and annually thereafter for the following 5 years, the Secretary shall submit a report to Congress that describes the effectiveness of BEST in enhancing border security and reducing the drug trafficking, arms smuggling, illegal alien trafficking and smuggling, violence, and kidnapping along and across the international borders of the United States, as measured by crime statistics, including violent deaths, incidents of violence, and drug-related arrests."

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents under section 1(b) of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 101(b)) is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 431 the following:

"Sec. 432. Border Enforcement Security Task Force."

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MCCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

I rise today in support of H.R. 915, the Jaime Zapata Border Enforcement Security Task Force Act. This bill, which will codify Border Enforcement

Security Task Force units, was named to honor the memory of slain Immigration and Customs Enforcement Special Agent Jaime Zapata.

In 2011, Special Agent Zapata and his associate, Special Agent Victor Avila, were ambushed on a dangerous stretch of highway in Mexico by the ruthless Zeta drug cartel. The vehicle that the two special agents were traveling in was forced off the road by the heavily armed thugs. Once the vehicle had come to a stop, the cartel members forced the doors open, fired their weapons at point blank range, and tried to drag away Special Agent Zapata, who fought back and was able to re-lock the doors. Special Agent Zapata tried to explain to the men that he and Special Agent Avila were U.S. diplomats. The gunman responded to his plea with bullets. Special Agent Zapata then heroically drove himself and Special Agent Avila away from the scene and to safety.

Investigators later found more than 80 individual bullet casings at the scene of the crime. By nothing short of a miracle, Special Agent Avila survived the ordeal. However, Jaime Zapata did not.

Border Enforcement Security Task Force units are comprised of DHS and other Federal, State, and local law enforcement personnel. They coordinate efforts to enhance border security and they mitigate threats posed by transnational crime, drug trafficking, arms smuggling, illegal alien traffic, violence, and kidnappings. These units will leverage the experience of personnel from the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the United States Customs and Border Protection, the United States Coast Guard, and other DHS components, as well as other Federal agencies, State, local, and tribal and, when appropriate, foreign law enforcement partners. With the increasing violence in Mexico and with the growing resourcefulness of vast criminal networks operating along the border, this type of interagency response is critical.

The men and women who have selflessly dedicated themselves to protecting our borders deserve this protection. Jaime Zapata paid the ultimate price, and I've made it a personal mission, along with my colleague from Texas (Mr. CUELLAR), to help ensure that no more brave men and women are lost to the violence along our southwest border. In addition to drug cartels freely moving across the border with drugs, cash, and weapons, the growing presence of Iran and Hezbollah in Latin America are also a threat. We do not have the luxury of sitting idly by while those looking to do us harm continue to enter the United States illegally.

I would like to thank my friend and colleague Representative CUELLAR for introducing this vitally important piece of bipartisan legislation. I would also like to thank Senators LIEBERMAN and COLLINS for taking action on this bill.

H.R. 915 honors Special Agent Jaime Zapata by making sure that those who serve as he did have the tools they need to secure the border.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Senate amendment to H.R. 915, the Jaime Zapata Border Enforcement Security Task Force Act, and yield myself such time as I may consume.

The bill before the House today would for the first time statutorily authorize an important border security program, the BEST program. Under BEST, ICE partners with Federal, State, local, and foreign law enforcement counterparts to establish targeted, cross-agency teams to identify, disrupt, and dismantle criminal organizations posing significant threats to border security. The program also serves as a model for interagency cooperation, coordination, and information sharing, which is vital in the post 9/11 environment.

I would note that it is appropriate that this bill is named in the memory of Jaime Zapata, an ICE special agent who was killed in the line of duty in Mexico while working as part of a BEST team.

H.R. 915 has enjoyed strong, bipartisan support in the House, passing with overwhelming support earlier this year, as well as in the Senate. Passage today will clear the bill for the President's signature.

I would like to commend the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CUELLAR) for his continued work on this important legislation and for being the sponsor of this legislation. The Committee on Homeland Security and Congress as a whole benefit from his commitment to border security matters.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1700

Mr. MCCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I have no more speakers and I'm prepared close, so I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the author of the underlying measure being considered, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CUELLAR).

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member, Mr. THOMPSON, for the leadership that he has provided on this piece of legislation and other legislation that is so important for the security of our Nation. I certainly want to thank also Chairman PETER KING and of course my good friend, MICHAEL MCCAUL, Chairman MCCAUL, for being one of the original cosponsors, along with BLAKE FARENTHOLD. We look forward to working with the folks on the border, including a new Member from the Brownsville area, Mr. Filemon Vela. Mr. MCCAUL and I have always worked in a very bipartisan way.

The Jaime Zapata bill, H.R. 915, has received bipartisan support. In May when it was first passed by the House,

it was overwhelmingly supported by the House, both Democrats and Republicans. It went over to the Senate, and I want to thank also Senator LIEBERMAN and Senator COLLINS for their support of this bill. Senator LIEBERMAN was just outstanding in making sure that we moved this bill over here as quickly as possible.

We now have a bill here that does two things. The first thing, it enhances border security. Number two is to name this particular bill in honor of a brave individual, Jaime Zapata, who has given up his life. Some months ago, both Chairman MCCAUL and I had the opportunity to meet with the family, with the mother and father, of this strong hero that we got to know in the service of the line of duty.

As you know, ICE, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, in partnership with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, as well as other Federal, State, local and foreign law enforcement, has created the BEST initiative. By the way, the first BEST initiative was created in Laredo back in 2005, and it has become a model across the country. It is a comprehensive approach to identify, disrupt, and dismantle transnational criminal organizations that have posed significant threats to the border and maritime security.

Through investigations, seizures of contraband, arrests and prosecutions, the BEST units are building an impressive record of success. Today, there are 34 BEST units throughout the United States. They work not only with their Mexican counterparts, but also on the northern border with their Canadian counterparts. And certainly we want to make sure that Congress provides support to the BEST units in order to enhance border security in the communities that we all represent.

So, again, Members, I would ask that you all work and support this bill today, a very appropriate time as we had the new President-elect of Mexico who came down here and met with Members of Congress and I believe at this particular time he is meeting with the President right now, President Barack Obama, and we look forward to working with our Mexican counterparts. We need to make sure that we keep in mind that a secure, strong, prosperous Mexico is in the best interest of the United States. Mexico is not an enemy; it is a friend of the United States. And I think both BENNIE THOMPSON and MICHAEL MCCAUL have been down to the border. We understand that the Rio Grande does not divide us as two countries, but unites us together.

Also, to the family of Jaime Zapata, losing a son is very, very difficult. And, again, we want to thank the family for providing this strong hero. We can say Jaime Zapata was truly a hero of the United States. Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support this bill by voting "aye" on H.R. 915.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the Senate amendment to H.R. 915.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MCCAUL. Mr. Speaker, just on a point of personal privilege, Mr. CUELLAR and I will be embarking at the end of this week to head down to Mexico City to the President of Mexico's inauguration. I agree with my colleague that our relationship with Mexico is vitally important and the idea that the BEST teams, Border Enforcement Security Teams, have provided an invaluable service on the border. In terms of confiscating cash and weapons going south into Mexico, they have been extremely successful; and if anything merits additional resources, it's this program. I can't think of a better program to name after Jaime Zapata.

I will also say that on the several occasions that I have met with Agent Avila and his family, it has been very emotional to see someone who has come back almost from an operation of war, if you will, who has been shot at by the Los Zeta cartel members, almost going through a PTSD-type situation, a very, very emotional experience; and I wish Agent Avila and his family the best in their recovery. He is a very brave, brave man and soldier. And also to the family of Jaime Zapata, we honor you today with this bill and please know that you are always in our thoughts and in our prayers.

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

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, today I am supporting H.R. 915, the Jaime Zapata Border Enforcement Security Task Force Act. This measure would establish Border Enforcement Security Task Force (BEST) teams within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to facilitate "collaboration among federal, state, local, tribal, and foreign law enforcement agencies to execute coordinated activities in furtherance of border security, and homeland security" and enhance information sharing among the agencies.

This mission is a very important one. And I encourage DHS to consult with local and state law enforcement on how these teams could best be used to fill gaps in border security.

I am particularly concerned about a proposal to close several interior border patrol stations. As an example, from 2007 through 2011 Border Patrol agents assigned to the Amarillo station made from 383 to 745 apprehensions per year. Despite this volume, the Border Patrol proposed closing its Amarillo station—along with eight other interior stations, six of them in Texas. The absence of the Amarillo interior Border Patrol station would leave no federal agency for hundreds of miles to take custody of illegal aliens or to assist local law enforcement with investigations.

I do not know whether the BEST teams authorized in this measure could fulfill the responsibilities of the border patrol stations that are proposed for closure. But I strongly recommend that DHS continue to examine ways to ensure that this vital federal responsibility is fulfilled.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by

the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MCCAUL) that the House suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendment to the bill, H.R. 915.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. MCCAUL. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

MEDICAL PREPAREDNESS ALLOWABLE USE ACT

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5997) to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to codify authority under existing grant guidance authorizing use of Urban Area Security Initiative and State Homeland Security Grant Program funding for enhancing medical preparedness, medical surge capacity, and mass prophylaxis capabilities, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5997

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 "Medical Preparedness Allowable Use Act".

SEC. 2. USE OF CERTAIN HOMELAND SECURITY GRANT FUNDS FOR ENHANCING MEDICAL PREPAREDNESS, MEDICAL SURGE CAPACITY, AND MASS PRO- PHYLAXIS CAPABILITIES.

Section 2008 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 609) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by redesignating paragraphs (10) through (13) as paragraphs (11) through (14), respectively, and by inserting after paragraph (9) the following:

"(10) enhancing medical preparedness, medical surge capacity, and mass prophylaxis capabilities, including the development and maintenance of an initial pharmaceutical stockpile, including medical kits, and diagnostics sufficient to protect first responders, their families, and immediate victims from a chemical or biological event"; and

(2) in subsection (b)(3)(B), by striking "(a)(10)" and inserting "(a)(11)".

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support H.R. 5997, the Medical Preparedness Allowable Use Act, a bipartisan bill which amends the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to make it clear that grant funds under the State Homeland Security Grant Program and the Urban Area Security Initiative may be used to enhance medical preparedness and purchase medical countermeasures.

I introduced H.R. 5997 after a series of hearings on medical countermeasures in the Committee on Homeland Security's Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications. At these hearings, we received testimony from representatives of the emergency response community on the importance of stockpiling medical countermeasures in the event of a WMD attack. This includes pre-deployed medical kits for first responders and their families, similar to those provided to postal workers participating in the national U.S. Postal Medical Countermeasures Dispensing Pilot Program.

The grant guidance for the State Homeland Security Grant Program and the Urban Area Security Initiative currently permits this funding to be used to procure medical countermeasures and for other medical preparedness and medical surge capacity equipment and activities. However, this guidance is developed on an annual basis, and there is no guarantee that these uses will be authorized in the future.

□ 1710

To be clear, this bill does not create a new grant program or authorize new funding. It simply ensures that these activities will remain allowable uses under SHSGP and UASI.

As the WMD Commission noted in its report, Mr. Speaker, "World at Risk," it is more likely than not that there will be a weapon of mass destruction used someplace on Earth by a terrorist group before the end of the year 2013, and it's more likely that this weapon will be biological, rather than nuclear.

The expenditures authorized and codified by the bill we are considering today can make a difference in the protection of the public, including emergency responders, in the event of such an attack, and there should be no doubt that grant funding may be used to support them now and in the future.

As the chairman of the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response and Communications, I consistently find myself in awe of our first responders and the sacrifices that they make on behalf of our public. In the wake of events such as Hurricane Sandy, I am committed to ensuring Congress does all that it can to support those brave men and women, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased that this legislation is supported by the Emergency Services Coalition on Medical Preparedness, which works to ensure that we protect the protectors.

I reserve the balance of my time.