

not be covered by this expanded designation. There are plenty of similar examples throughout the country of the Bureau oddly designating manifestly rural areas as “nonrural.” Furthermore, the Bureau still has not implemented an appeals process for improperly designated communities.

Mr. Speaker, in summary, this legislation is about inviting individuals—the American people—to participate in their government and provide input on matters of local knowledge. It is about making the Federal Government more accessible, more accountable, and more responsive to the people who know their local communities best.

I am pleased that this legislation enjoys bipartisan support and, again, want to thank Representative HINOJOSA for joining me as a cosponsor of this legislation. I want to thank Chairman NEUGEBAUER for his cosponsorship and stewardship of the legislation in committee, as well as my friend Congressman FRENCH HILL for joining as a cosponsor.

This legislation is endorsed by a broad coalition, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Conference of State Bank Supervisors, the National Association of Realtors, the American Bankers Association, the Independent Community Bankers of America, the Credit Union National Association, and the National Association of Federal Credit Unions.

This is a commonsense and narrowly focused bill to address a real problem imposed by Washington on rural America. I appreciate the opportunity to present it here today, and I urge my colleagues to support this simple, bipartisan reform.

Mr. CAPUANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA), my friend.

Mr. HINOJOSA. I want to thank Congressman MIKE CAPUANO for yielding time to me on this important bill.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1259, the Helping Expand Lending Practices in Rural Communities Act. This commonsense legislation would provide much-needed relief to rural Americans not just in my district, but in districts all over the country.

I especially would like to thank my esteemed colleague from Kentucky, Representative ANDY BARR, for introducing this very important piece of legislation once again. I fully agree with Congressman BARR's examples which he gave affecting his district and all of the State of Kentucky because in the great State of Texas, we have examples that will mirror those that you gave us.

All across my district—and I represent approximately 80 communities in my congressional district that expands 250 miles geographically—many rural communities are having trouble getting access to credit, while credit unions and small banks are also finding it difficult to service their members and clients.

The designation of a county as rural has many implications for lenders in those areas, especially with regard to the credit products that they can offer. For example, under the new qualified mortgage rules, balloon mortgage payments, which are a common credit product offered in rural communities, would expose small creditors to increased legal liability. Because of this, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau established a safe harbor to allow for small creditors in counties as I have described designated as rural to continue offering this financial product which serves so many of the people in those areas; but if not designated as rural, many of those communities I have mentioned will not qualify for the safe harbor exemption.

That is why we are here today, trying to fix something that needs to be fixed in terms of home mortgage lending. This bill gives those who do business in rural communities all over the country the ability to petition the CFPB to reverse an improper designation of nonrural for a county that is clearly rural. It will give lenders in many areas throughout my district the flexibility they need to offer the credit products that their members depend on, while still keeping in place the very important consumer protections established under the new QM rules.

I would like to once again thank Representative BARR for his outstanding work on this bill and in our committee. It has been wonderful collaborating with him to bring the concerns of rural communities to the forefront.

I respectfully request that my colleagues on both sides of the aisle vote “yes” on passage of H.R. 1259.

Mr. NEUGEBAUER. Mr. Speaker, I don't have any other speakers at this time, so I will reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1630

Mr. CAPUANO. Mr. Speaker, we have no further speakers on this bill.

I would like to add my voice to supporting this bill as well.

I will tell you unequivocally, my definition of rural is whatever ANDY BARR and RUBÉN HINOJOSA say it is. 11,591 people in a county? I have that on a street; I have that in a building. I will tell you that I understand full well that there are underserved communities in rural areas, as there are even in some of the most urban areas in the country.

I thank the gentleman for this bill.

I will tell you that my definition of rural is anyplace that would take me more than 15 minutes to drive to some good Italian food. If you can't do that, it must be rural.

I am glad that this bill is about to pass, and I thank the gentleman for offering it.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. NEUGEBAUER. Mr. Speaker, I just want to close by saying I appreciate Mr. BARR's and Mr. HINOJOSA's work on this very important issue.

One of the reasons we are here and bringing these bills today is because we have had a tremendous reduction in the number of community-based financial institutions that serve rural America. In the last 4 or 5 years, we have lost over a thousand community banks and we have lost over a thousand credit unions. That is a real problem for our smaller communities. One of the things that this bill helps to do is that in many communities there is one bank, there is one financial institution, and without the ability to have flexibility to make these kinds of mortgages, in many cases there would not be mortgages available in those communities. This is a commonsense bill. It passed 56-2 out of our committee. I would urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, 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. NEUGEBAUER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1259.

The question was taken.

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

Mr. NEUGEBAUER. 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.

BUREAU ADVISORY COMMISSION TRANSPARENCY ACT

Mr. NEUGEBAUER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1265) to apply the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act to the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1265

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 “Bureau Advisory Commission Transparency Act”.

SEC. 2. APPLICATION OF FACA.

Section 1013 of the Consumer Financial Protection Act of 2010 (12 U.S.C. 5493) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(h) APPLICATION OF FACA.—Notwithstanding any provision of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.), such Act shall apply to each advisory committee of the Bureau and each subcommittee of such an advisory committee.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. NEUGEBAUER) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. CAPUANO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. NEUGEBAUER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within

which to revise and extend their remarks and add extraneous materials on this bill.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. NEUGEBAUER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. DUFFY), the primary author of this bill, who has worked tirelessly to make sure that these advisory committees have transparency.

Mr. DUFFY. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman for yielding to me. I thank him for his support in regard to my legislation and for all the work he does on Financial Services, as well as the support from the chairman and ranking member of the Committee on Financial Services. I am grateful to them as well.

As we gather in this Chamber, I don't think it is very often that we come in in a kumbaya moment in regard to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. I think those who follow our committee would recognize that there are a few differences in how the CFPB is structured and how it should move forward. We have had that debate. All of us agree that consumers should be protected, and they should have a strong advocate in that protection.

Though we have disagreed on some elements of the CFPB, I am proud today that we have a bipartisan group coming in talking about some straightforward reforms that make some of the rules from the CFPB work a lot better and help consumers out, help Americans out, help our constituents out.

In regard to my bill, in the last Congress, I tried to go to one of the advisory committees at the CFPB. Now, most of these are usually open in government. There are only a couple of exceptions. If you work at the CIA, the CIA doesn't open up their advisory committee meetings for obvious purposes and reasons; and the Fed, with the FOMC, when they are setting monetary policy, they too don't open up their meetings, community advisory meetings, for obvious purposes.

But when I tried to go to a CFPB meeting in the last Congress, I was told by the CFPB that they would not accommodate my request because their meetings were closed. That concerned me because the CFPB has said that "transparency is at the core of our agenda, and it is the key part of how we operate." On their Web site, they say that "you deserve to know what we're doing for the American public and how we are doing it."

So I had some concern that when the rest of government opens up their meetings, the CFPB wouldn't open up their meetings and allow the public to hear the conversation and the dialogue that was going on. I highly doubt the information is as sensitive as what is taking place at the CIA or setting monetary policy, and if we are protecting consumers, that should be an open conversation and debate.

When I introduced a similar bill in the last Congress, I actually received a phone call from the Director, who said: You know what? This is a good bill. You know, we have had some disagreement on how the CFPB is run, but we will open up our meetings.

Well, I don't know if in that phone call we had we weren't on the same page or what. I am not going to say it was trickery on the Director's part, but what happened was the CFPB opened up only a small portion of their advisory committee meetings, about an hour and a half, and in the other vast majority of the meetings, they moved them into what was called a subcommittee so they wouldn't be open. What my bill today does is make sure these meetings are open to the public, that we as a community, as an American family, get to see the conversation that is taking place in the advisory committees to the CFPB. It makes complete sense.

I am proud and honored that my friends across the aisle were supportive of this measure. The ranking member, Ms. WATERS, actually spoke kind of in favor of my proposal. I mean, I took it that way. She voted for it and recommended a vote in favor of it. I appreciate her bipartisanship.

I think this is about making good work, making it accountable, making it transparent, and that is a start, at least in the advisory meetings that our government takes part in.

I am grateful for the support; I am grateful for the time, and I urge my colleagues to support this great piece of bipartisan, transparent legislation.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill. As Mr. DUFFY just said, on occasion, we can come to an agreement. This is the second CFPB bill we have done in a row. There are many things we would like to work together on.

We do wish, however, that on some of the other items on the CFPB, some of the members of the Financial Services Committee would kind of get off the horse a little bit and come on down and work with us.

These two bills are very good bills, as far as I am concerned. The CFPB already does some of the things this act would impose, but they should do them all. There is no question about it. That is why this is an easy bill to support. I thank Mr. DUFFY for offering it.

I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman from Wisconsin's work on this. Some of the points that he made is that this is about transparency. Why that is important is because this agency, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, is making the important decisions about the kinds of financial products that American families can access.

Quite honestly, some people think that, in many ways, the actions of this

agency have been beginning to reduce some of the availability of some of those financial products.

I think it is important to have these advisory groups. I want to commend the agency for having those, but I think it is important, also, for the American people to hear the comments and the discussions that are going on that could inevitably affect the kinds of financial products that they are going to be able to access in the future.

Now, the fact is that many of the other agencies have to fall under the FACA, but because this agency is tucked inside the Federal Reserve—and the Federal Reserve currently is exempt—but, quite honestly, the only other agencies that are exempt from it are the CIA, the Director of National Intelligence, and the Federal Reserve as they are talking about monetary policy. I hardly believe that the CFPB falls in the same category of any of these other agencies that are exempt.

This is a commonsense piece of legislation. It allows that same transparency available in all other agencies across the government and allows the American people to hear those important discussions about their future and about the financial products that they are going to be able to access in the future.

Again, I want to remind everybody this was a bipartisan bill that passed 56-2 out of our committee.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support passage of this bill.

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. NEUGEBAUER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1265.

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. DUFFY. 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 motion will be postponed.

EXPEDITED FUNDS AVAILABILITY ACT AMENDMENT

Mr. NEUGEBAUER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1367) to amend the Expedited Funds Availability Act to clarify the application of that Act to American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1367

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

SECTION 1. APPLICATION OF THE EXPEDITED FUNDS AVAILABILITY ACT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Expedited Funds Availability Act (12 U.S.C. 4001 et seq.) is amended—