

the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BISHOP) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2617, 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.

CROSS-BORDER RAIL SECURITY
ACT OF 2015

Ms. MCSALLY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2786) to require the Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection to submit a report on cross-border rail security, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2786

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 “Cross-Border Rail Security Act of 2015”.

SEC. 2. CROSS-BORDER RAIL SECURITY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) shall submit to the Committee on Homeland Security of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a report on the following:

(1) The number of shipments entering the United States by rail annually that are determined to be high-risk by the Commissioner.

(2) Specific details on the status of radiation detection units, by type, at each rail crossing on the northern and southern land borders as of such date of enactment.

(3) An assessment of whether additional radiation detection equipment is necessary to ensure that all such high-risk cross-border rail shipments are examined with appropriate equipment.

(4) A plan for ensuring that all relevant CBP personnel receive adequate training and guidance on the proper use of CBP’s Automated Targeting System for such high-risk cross-border rail shipments, the use of appropriate radiation detection equipment for examination of such high-risk cross-border rail shipments, and requirements for recording examination results.

(b) GAO AUDIT.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall periodically audit U.S. Customs and Border Protection operations at rail crossings on the northern and southern international borders to ensure rail shipments are targeted, examined, and the results of such examinations properly documented.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Arizona (Ms. MCSALLY) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. VELA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Arizona.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2786, the Cross-Border Rail Security Act of 2015.

First, I would like to thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. VELA), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security, for introducing this thoughtful bill and working in a collaborative manner as this legislation moved through the committee process.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation requires the Commissioner of Customs and Border Protection to submit a report to Congress that outlines how and when high-risk rail shipments entering the United States are scanned for potential risks.

The impetus for this legislation was a recent inspector general report that found CBP was inadequately targeting high-risk rail shipments arriving in the U.S. from Canada and Mexico. This bill will help Congress better understand the frequency and location of such high-risk shipments and detail the current state of radiation detection equipment on our international railways.

Mr. Speaker, as many of my colleagues who also live along the border know, each year approximately 2.7 million containers enter the United States by rail. While most of the commodities transferred by rail do not pose significant homeland security threats, we must ensure that we are properly identifying and targeting those shipments which are high risk and conduct physical scanning when necessary.

To ensure proper oversight, it is very important to understand the capabilities of CBP, including the number, location, and type of detection equipment used at each cross-border rail crossing. We also need to understand what additional equipment and training is necessary to ensure our rail cargo system is secure.

As we know, proper training is an important force multiplier which will help maximize effectiveness of our Customs and Border Protection Officers, reducing wait times and increasing security.

Finally, H.R. 2786 requires the Government Accountability Office to perform a series of audits over CBP’s targeting of cross-border rail shipments.

Mr. Speaker, rail cargo is expected to increase over the next 10 years. This bill will ensure CBP adequately addresses this vulnerability and implements proper standards of screening and targeting for rail cargo. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2786.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2786, the Cross-Border Rail Security Act.

Mr. Speaker, in March of this year, the Department of Homeland Security’s inspector general released a report on high-risk cross-border rail cargo. The report concluded that U.S. Customs and Border Protection, or CBP, did not always use the required radiation detection equipment to examine shipments it determined to be high risk. Additionally, some ports of entry lacked the appropriate equipment to conduct these screenings, and training and oversight of targeting and examining such shipments was lacking.

In response to these troubling findings, my bill would require the CBP Commissioner to submit to the relevant congressional committees within 180 days of enactment a report regarding high-risk cross-border rail cargo shipments entering the United States.

Mr. Speaker, my bill would require the report to include information on the number of high-risk shipments crossing the border by rail, details on the radiation detection units at rail crossings, an assessment of whether additional equipment is necessary, and a plan for ensuring that all relevant CBP personnel receive appropriate training to appropriately target, examine, and record the disposition of such shipments. The bill requires the Government Accountability Office to audit periodically CBP operations at rail crossings to ensure rail shipments are being appropriately targeted, examined, and documented.

The community I represent has a vested interest in securing cross-border rail cargo. This past August, I was proud to be a part of the opening of the West Rail Bypass International Bridge located in Brownsville, Texas, the first international new rail crossing between the U.S. and Mexico in over a century.

Both of our land borders are dotted with these crossings, and, in fact, the majority of them are located on the northern border. The cargo that crosses by rail is destined for locations all over the United States, making the effective targeting and examining of high-risk shipments a national concern.

Mr. Speaker, my committee colleagues unanimously supported this bill, and I urge all of my colleagues to help strengthen the cross-border rail security by supporting H.R. 2786.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I once again urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2786.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, as a senior member of the Homeland Security Committee, I rise in support of H.R. 2786, the “Cross-Border Rail Security Act of 2015,” which directs U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to report to Congress on its inspection of high-risk shipments entering the United States by rail.

Specifically, H.R. 2786 requires the CBP to report on the following matters related to homeland security:

the number of high-risk rail shipments annually entering the country;
the status of radiation detection units at each border rail crossing; and
an assessment of whether additional radiation detection equipment is necessary.

The bill also requires CBP to develop a plan for ensuring that all relevant CBP personnel receive adequate training and guidance on the proper use of CBP's Automated Targeting System for such shipments, and in the use of appropriate radiation detection equipment for shipment examination, and requirements for recording examination results.

H.R. 2786 bill also requires the General Accountability Office to periodically audit CBP operations at rail crossings on borders to ensure rail shipments are targeted, examined, and the examination results are well documented.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is good for our nation and for my congressional district, which is centered in Houston, Texas.

Houston has been the hub of railroad hub of Texas since the 1880s and is known as the place "where 17 railroads meet the sea."

It is also the "the energy capital of the world."

Freight from the Houston area goes by railroad to destinations all over the United States, including Los Angeles, Long Beach, New York City, Charleston, and Savannah.

Over 1 billion tons of freight travels through Houston area each year; no other state comes close to the level of trade the metropolitan Houston region experiences.

One billion tons of freight leaves the Houston area each year, nearly two/ thirds of which (645 million tons) involve goods come from foreign sources.

The top foreign freight origination point for the City of Houston is Mexico.

Mexico supplies over 50% of all international freight in the Houston area.

Europe and Canada are Houston's second largest foreign freight trading partners, accounting for over 27% of international freight in the Houston area.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in supporting H.R. 2786 because the safety of rail transit is critical to the security of the homeland and strength of our economy.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Arizona (Ms. MCSALLY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2786.

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. VELA. 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.

BORDER JOBS FOR VETERANS ACT OF 2015

Ms. MCSALLY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2835) to actively recruit members

of the Armed Forces who are separating from military service to serve as Customs and Border Protection officers, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.
The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2835

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 "Border Jobs for Veterans Act of 2015".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Customs and Border Protection officers at United States ports of entry carry out critical law enforcement duties associated with screening foreign visitors, returning United States citizens, and imported cargo entering the United States.

(2) It is in the national interest for United States ports of entry to be adequately staffed with Customs and Border Protection officers in a timely fashion, including meeting the congressionally funded staffing target of 23,775 officers for fiscal year 2015.

(3) An estimated 250,000 to 300,000 members of the Armed Forces separate from military service every year.

(4) Recruiting efforts and expedited hiring procedures must be enhanced to ensure that individuals separating from military service are aware of, and partake in, opportunities to fill vacant Customs and Border Protection officer positions.

SEC. 3. EXPEDITED HIRING OF APPROPRIATE SEPARATING SERVICE MEMBERS.

The Secretary of Homeland Security shall consider the expedited hiring of qualified candidates who have the ability to perform the essential functions of the position of a Customs and Border Protection officer and who are eligible for a veterans recruitment appointment authorized under section 4214 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 4. ENHANCEMENTS TO EXISTING PROGRAMS TO RECRUIT SERVICE MEMBERS SEPARATING FROM MILITARY SERVICE FOR CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION OFFICER VACANCIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, and acting through existing programs, authorities, and agreements, where applicable, shall enhance the efforts of the Department of Homeland Security to recruit members of the Armed Forces who are separating from military service to serve as Customs and Border Protection officers.

(b) ELEMENTS.—The enhanced recruiting efforts under subsection (a) shall—

(1) include Customs and Border Protection officer opportunities in relevant job assistance efforts under the Transition Assistance Program;

(2) place U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials or other relevant Department of Homeland Security officials at recruiting events and jobs fairs involving members of the Armed Forces who are separating from military service;

(3) provide opportunities for local U.S. Customs and Border Protection field offices to partner with military bases in the region;

(4) include outreach efforts to educate members of the Armed Forces with Military Occupational Specialty Codes and Officer Branches, Air Force Specialty Codes, Naval Enlisted Classifications and Officer Designators, and Coast Guard competencies that are transferable to the requirements, qualifications, and duties assigned to Customs and Border Protection officers of available hiring opportunities to become Customs and Border Protection officers;

(5) identify shared activities and opportunities for reciprocity related to steps in hiring Customs and Border Protection officers with the goal of minimizing the time required to hire qualified applicants;

(6) ensure the streamlined interagency transfer of relevant background investigations and security clearances; and

(7) include such other elements as may be necessary to ensure that members of the Armed Forces who are separating from military service are aware of opportunities to fill vacant Customs and Border Protection officer positions.

SEC. 5. REPORT TO CONGRESS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and by December 31 of each of the next three years thereafter, the Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, shall submit a report to the Committee on Homeland Security and the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs and the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate that includes a description and assessment of the efforts of the Department of Homeland Security to hire members of the Armed Forces who are separating from military service as Customs and Border Protection officers under section 4.

(b) CONTENT.—The report required under subsection (a) shall include—

(1) a detailed description of the efforts to implement section 4, including—

(A) elements of the enhanced recruiting efforts and the goals associated with such elements; and

(B) a description of how the elements and goals referred to in subparagraph (A) will assist in meeting statutorily mandated staffing levels and agency hiring benchmarks;

(2) a detailed description of the efforts that have been undertaken under section 4;

(3) the estimated number of separating service members made aware of Customs and Border Protection officer vacancies;

(4) the number of Customs and Border Protection officer vacancies filled with separating service members; and

(5) the number of Customs and Border Protection officer vacancies filled with separating service members under Veterans Recruitment Appointment authorized under section 4214 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 6. RULES OF CONSTRUCTION.

Nothing in this Act may be construed—

(1) as superseding, altering, or amending existing Federal veterans' hiring preferences or Federal hiring authorities; or

(2) to authorize the appropriation of additional amounts to carry out this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Arizona (Ms. MCSALLY) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. VELA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Arizona.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. MCSALLY. Mr. 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 on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support H.R. 2835, the Border Jobs for Veterans