

Democrats have all documented shortcomings in SBA's administration of the disaster loan program.

Our committee found, for instance, that small businesses waited 46 days to get their application processed by SBA, a threefold increase over previous Atlantic storms. The IG found the agency lacked clear guidance which resulted in confusion for borrowers, inconsistent application of underwriting criteria, and loans going to ineligible entities.

H.R. 208 addresses these shortcomings and ensures those affected by Hurricane Sandy are treated fairly. To begin, the bill would allow businesses to apply again for loans. As SBA was so unprepared for a disaster of this scale, it is important that those impacted have another chance at securing assistance.

This bill would also correct many of the problems identified by the IG. SBA will be required to provide up-front notification to borrowers on necessary documentation as well as establish clear written policies for loan officers. By clearing up confusion for both borrowers and SBA staff, H.R. 208 will ensure funds flow more swiftly to businesses after future catastrophes.

Lastly, the measure incorporates a number of bipartisan reforms from our Senate colleagues. Under these provisions, for instance, businesses would no longer be prohibited from posting their assets as collateral. This is important as, previously, many entrepreneurs have had to use personal assets for loan collateral.

Mr. Speaker, this is a truly bipartisan, bicameral effort that focuses on better assisting small businesses impacted by natural disasters.

I want to thank Chairman CHABOT for his leadership and support on this legislation. I also wanted to thank Chairman VITTER, Ranking Member SHAHEEN, and Senators MENENDEZ and BOOKER for their hard work in crafting this bill.

I urge my colleagues to support it.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

When disasters strike, getting small businesses back on their feet quickly can help local economies recover. For that to happen, the SBA's disaster lending initiatives must work as intended, providing emergency capital to firms that have suffered physical and economical damage.

H.R. 208 would allow businesses that encounter delays to reapply for assistance and be made whole. It also improves how the agency functions going forward, speeding help to small businesses and homeowners when they are most in need. This is a bipartisan bill, and it will do much good for entrepreneurs impacted by Sandy and for businesses impacted by future disasters.

I want to thank Chairman VITTER, Ranking Member SHAHEEN, Senators

MENENDEZ and BOOKER, and especially Chairman CHABOT for working in a bipartisan manner to get this bill to the President.

I also would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff for the Senate Small Business Committee and our staff for the House Small Business Committee: Adam Minehardt, Justin Pelletier, Emily Murphy, Barry Pinelas, and Corey Cooke.

I encourage my colleagues to vote "yes."

I yield back the balance of my time. Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, we never know when or where the next disaster will strike. But, unfortunately, we do know that there will be another disaster. In fact, there will be more disasters. Given this, we must ensure that the SBA is truly prepared to help victims in the aftermath of those disasters.

H.R. 208 rights the wrongs imposed by the SBA on those who suffered from the effects of Sandy. But H.R. 208 does more than just correct past mistakes. It imposes obligations on the SBA to ensure the agency learns from history and does not repeat those mistakes.

I urge my colleagues to vote to concur on the Senate amendment H.R. 208.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) that the House suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendment to the bill, H.R. 208.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK

(Mr. HONDA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, this week is American Education Week.

Today I rise to choose my bill, the Equity and Excellence in American Education Act, which will move us towards a more equitable education funding system. We can wait no longer to act, knowing we are not providing each and every child with a quality education.

My legislation is a starting point to establish equity as a foundational principle of our education system, especially in funding. Each and every child deserves to have an enriched education based on equity. Equity acknowledges all children are different with different needs. Equity means supporting families and students at the beginning with quality preschool and K-5 educational strategies based on equity.

Rather than saying, "What can we do with the funding we traditionally receive?", we instead start with the question, "How much do we need to meet

the needs of each and every child?" and build a system which reflects that funding. This will be a challenge, but one we must take on.

HONORING THE VICTIMS OF THE NOVEMBER 13, 2015, TERROR ATTACK IN PARIS

(Mr. HILL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, I stand in the well of the House witnessed by the portraits of George Washington and his protege, an invaluable ally to America, the Marquis de Lafayette.

On Friday, November 13, the world watched in horror as they witnessed the terrorist attacks in Paris that claimed the lives of 129 civilians from over 15 different countries.

These brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, friends and loved ones, whose lives were taken away too soon from us and those who were gravely wounded from this attack will not be forgotten. My thoughts and prayers are with the victims, their families and friends, and the strong resilient people of France.

This massacre at the hands of barbarous terrorists was an attack on the civilized world, and we will not let these horrific actions stand. We stand strong.

Today the flags at the U.S. Capitol fly at half-staff. We stand in solidarity with France, honor the victims of this attack, and in the call to combat this massing menace, place our undying faith in our two democracies bound together by young Lafayette's faithful and courageous service.

HONORING REVEREND RONALD B. CHRISTIAN

(Mr. PAYNE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, back in my home State of New Jersey, we had the honor of having a going-home celebration for a remarkable individual from my community. He was known as Reverend Ron. His name was Ronald B. Christian.

Reverend Ron's ministry was unique because Reverend Ron looked at the least of us and took them in without judgment to help them with their ills, whether they have drug issues or issues with the criminal justice system.

He never, never judged because he had seen the worst that life could show you because he had gone through some of it himself. And one day God stood him up and said: Now serve my people.

This great man passed away several weeks ago, but I wanted to honor him on the floor of the United States Congress. He was a unique individual. He was one of God's children.

On the outside of his church, it said "Sinners welcome," and he never wavered, and he never turned his back.

We will miss the Reverend Ronald B. Christian from Christian Love Baptist Church.

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RESILIENT FEDERAL FORESTS ACT

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, Pennsylvania's Fifth Congressional District, which I am proud to represent, includes the Allegheny National Forest. The forest covers more than 500,000 acres, and the use of its hardwoods has supported the communities of the Elk, Forest, McKean, and Warren Counties for generations.

Mr. Speaker, since these small towns depend on the harvesting of trees from the Allegheny National Forest, I am deeply concerned by the news that, while the amount of timber cut in the forest has increased in recent years, the number sold has sharply declined.

In fact, timber sales have gone down 19 percent in the past 5 years. Furthermore, a majority of the timber harvested is being sold as pulp and not as the high-value hardwood which is used to create furniture, flooring, and as veneers.

This is one of the reasons I cosponsored the Resilient Federal Forests Act, which passed the House earlier this year, as it would enhance the management efforts in our national forests to make sure our quality hardwoods are being used in the right ways.

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS: RACE RELATIONS IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. KELLY) is recognized for half the remaining time, until 10 p.m., as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor and privilege to lead tonight's Congressional Black Caucus Special Order hour. For 60 minutes, we have the opportunity to speak directly to the American people.

Before we get to business, I do want to take a moment to express my condolences and the prayers of the Congressional Black Caucus and this Congress to our allies in France after Friday night's attacks in Paris.

Our hearts go out to the victims and their families. No act of terror can shake the resolve of the French people

to live free, and nothing will impede France's ability to live prosperously. I want the people of France to know that the American people and this Congress stand in solidarity with the people of France tonight. I say this with full faith and confidence that no act of terror will deter France or the United States from embracing the principles of liberty, equality, and brotherhood.

Our hearts also go out to those who recently lost loved ones and friends in Beirut and Nigeria.

Mr. Speaker, in this hour, the Congressional Black Caucus will have a conversation with America about the issue of race relations in this country. This isn't a new topic of discussion. To be honest, I really wish there were no need and no appetite remaining in America so as to have to address this topic.

It is amazing that the same nation that saw pilgrims journey to our shores on the Mayflower and that the same nation that saw Founding Father Ben Franklin make groundbreaking discoveries in electric science is the same nation that was able to land a man on the Moon and harness the electromagnetic spectrum for our mobile devices. We still wrestle with the same problem that confronted Ben Franklin and the Founding Fathers so long ago: the issue of race relations in America.

As President Obama so eloquently remarked, the answer to the slavery question was already embedded within our Constitution—a Constitution that had at its very core the ideal of equal citizenship under the law, a Constitution that promised its people liberty and justice and a union that could be and should be perfected over time.

Yet these words were not enough to deliver slaves from bondage or to provide men and women of every color and creed with their full rights and obligations as citizens of the United States.

It is this inherited sin that has guided a national history of challenging race relations in America, from slavery to the Three-Fifths Compromise, to a nation divided and broken over the issue of slavery, to poll taxes and literacy tests, to separate but equal, to Japanese internment, to anti-Semitism, to the Tuskegee experiment, to Brown v. The Board of Education, to the loving Confederate flags at State houses, to the Confederate statues in this Capitol, and to parishioners executed during a Charleston Bible study, executed in the hopes that it would spark a race war. It is the sad truth that, while race relations do not define us as a nation, ignoring and perverting these relations has left a painful blemish on our national record.

Mr. Speaker, many times this year the Congressional Black Caucus has come before you in this hour to discuss the issue of Black voter suppression in America, the mass incarceration of African American males in America, the issue of Black Lives Matter, community fears over unfair and unequal treatment at the hands of bad apple

law enforcement officers, and the economic concerns of communities of color.

These concerns aren't made up. The impact and evidence of these concerns can be found everywhere for proof. Look at Amendments 13 through 15. Look at the issue of African Americans having higher rates of mortality than any other racial ethnic group for 8 of the top 10 causes of death. Look at the Black Lives Matter protests that we have had across the country. These concerns are our reality, and we must know these things to be true. We know more must be done to strengthen our national record on race.

Tonight I want to use my time to discuss race relations in America, but I want to do so in a way that looks forward and not behind. I want to have a conversation about strengthening our national foundation and about healing the racial wounds of our past. In this conversation about race relations in America, I will highlight areas of need and opportunity that should be examined. Tonight's conversation should be a strong step toward progress.

It is my true honor and pleasure to coanchor this hour with my distinguished colleague from New Jersey, a man who has committed his time in Congress to strengthening communities and bridging cultures.

I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey, the Honorable DONALD PAYNE, Jr., my colleague.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Illinois. It has been a labor of love that we have represented the Congressional Black Caucus in these Special Order hours this year.

Our year is coming to a close. As we look back at the issues that we have discussed over the course of this year, it has been an honor and a privilege to work alongside my colleague, R. KELLY.

As for tonight's issue, we have seen in recent weeks a number of racially charged incidents that have set off protests on college campuses across the country. From the University of Missouri to Yale, students have protested the inadequate responses of their school administrations to racism and harassment against minority students. We have seen the failure of many college administrations to properly address overt racism against minority students on campus.

Adding to the anxiety felt by these students have been threats of violence against African American students and faculty. In many instances, there is a disconnect between students of color and the university leaders.

In many of these instances, administrators have openly acknowledged that their responses to minority students have come too late and that their behavior has failed to take into consideration the concerns of students and the injustices against those students.

This is an extension of the debate over interactions—often deadly—between law enforcement and African