

practices do not inadvertently support debt bondage, because that debt bondage is one of the tools of human traffickers.

At some overseas posts, the State Department and USAID rely on contractors to provide construction, security, maintenance, and other services, and these contractors sometimes employ foreign workers recruited from far away, far-away developing countries where they are vulnerable to abuses. In particular, the middlemen those contractors rely on often charge recruitment fees to prospective employees—in other words, payments for the right to work.

Current law prohibits U.S. contractors from charging foreign workers unreasonable recruitment fees, and the State Department claims to prohibit any recruitment fees at all. However, neither State nor USAID have defined what constitutes a “recruitment fee,” and this ambiguity allows for a loophole that has been exploited. Recruiters simply rename these fees and continue charging them.

This is a serious problem. We had a report by the State Department Inspector General in 2011. He found that a majority of the Department’s foreign contract workers in certain Middle East countries were paying substantial fees to recruiters—and this is what caught our attention—sometimes more than a year’s salary resulting in, in the words of our Inspector General—in his words—“effective debt bondage.”

A worker from the Philippines performing janitorial services for our Embassy in Saudi Arabia should not be at risk of shakedowns from unscrupulous or violent operators.

To ensure that our overseas contracting does not feed such problems, this bill requires State and USAID to define what prohibited “recruitment fees” are and to report to Congress on their plans to improve contract monitoring, to protect against human trafficking. A prohibition is only forceful if people understand what is prohibited. Clarifying these matters will give our contractors the guidance they need to ensure that our laws and policies are followed by those they use to recruit foreign workers.

I again want to thank Mr. ENGEL and all of our cosponsors for their support of this strongly bipartisan bill which deserves our unanimous support.

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

Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this measure.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Chairman ROYCE and also Ranking Member ENGEL for their leadership and for their hard work on this bill.

It seems that every day we see another report about the way modern slavery touches our lives. Fish caught by an enslaved sailor in Southeast Asia ends up in our grocery stores. Rare

metals that are needed to power our smartphones are mined through forced labor in Central Africa. Oranges and tomatoes grown right here in the United States are picked by migrants who end up trapped and isolated.

Human trafficking is a crime that affects every nation on Earth. It undermines stability, fuels criminal networks, and robs tens of millions of people of their basic freedom. It touches all of our lives.

United States Government has long been a leader in the fight against trafficking. Republican and Democratic administrations alike have focused hard on the best way to prevent modern slavery, protect its victims, and prosecute those responsible. The State Department’s Annual Trafficking in Persons Report is the global gold standard for assessing how well governments are doing to combat this problem.

As we learn more and more about this crime, how it has worked its way into the global supply chain and labor market, we find new ways of disrupting trafficking networks. Part of American leadership on this issue must be to make sure, first and foremost, that we are not making this problem worse.

Our foreign affairs agencies employ thousands of foreign contract workers overseas. These men and women work in construction, food service, and security projects abroad.

In 2011, inspectors interviewing some of these workers found that 77 percent of them had paid recruiting fees to the company arranging the work. What that means is before workers are able to get these jobs, they need to pay a recruiter a hefty sum. Sometimes these fees are 6 months’ or even a year’s wages. These fees can include the high costs of housing or transportation to a worksite in a foreign country. So often, a worker arrives at a new job saddled with debt and is forced to work until he or she can pay the so-called recruiter back.

This sort of treatment is unacceptable under any circumstances. The fact that this is happening to individuals working for the United States Government is absolutely intolerable.

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We cannot be the world’s leader in the fight against modern slavery if taxpayer dollars are flowing into the hands of traffickers.

The Obama administration saw this problem and took steps to deal with it. An executive order forbids any U.S. Government contractors from charging unreasonable recruitment fees. But so far the State Department and USAID have been unable to enforce this requirement. The reason why—neither agency has defined recruitment fees, so their guidelines for fair treatment of workers by contractors are unenforceable.

Mr. Speaker, this is simply not acceptable. This bill requires that the

State Department and USAID adopt a legally binding definition of recruitment fees. In addition, the agencies must improve how they monitor contractors to detect and prevent human trafficking.

This legislation represents a commonsense step to resolve this problem and to make sure we have a clean House as we lead global antitrafficking efforts. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this important piece of legislation.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations, and he is the author of the original Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my good friend and colleague, the distinguished chairman, ED ROYCE, for his persistence and creativity in finding new ways to hold the administration accountable for preventing human trafficking, especially in government contracting, as is required by the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2005 and the National Defense Authorization Act of 2013.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that U.S. Government procurement should be the quintessential example of how to buy goods and services from reputable vendors. The TVPA ensures that contracts are lost if there is complicity in trafficking and that responsible parties are prosecuted if they, in like manner, are complicit in human trafficking.

H.R. 400 targets a key piece of the law for practical implementation and brings our government one step closer to ensuring that U.S. tax dollars are not going to companies that look askance at human trafficking by their contractors and subcontractors.

Again, this is a very important bill. I want to thank the distinguished chairman for his leadership on this.

Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

In closing, I would simply congratulate the gentleman who does a wonderful job chairing our Foreign Affairs Committee. As I said on a radio show in Philadelphia last week, I really wish those who say that there is no bipartisanship in Washington, D.C., could see the way the ranking member, Mr. ENGEL, and our chairman, Mr. ROYCE, conduct our foreign affairs business. I think they would have a different view.

I am proud to support this piece of legislation, and I urge all my colleagues to do so.

I yield back the balance of my time.

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

I want to thank Mr. BRENDAN BOYLE of Pennsylvania for his work on this.

On the heels of Human Trafficking Awareness Month, I think it is important that we as an institution take this

opportunity to ensure that our own overseas contracting does not indirectly support debt bondage, and that is what this legislation ensures. Our practices need to reflect our Nation's fundamental commitments to freedom and human dignity, and, most importantly as well, we need to set an example for the rest of the world. I think by passing this legislation we will do so.

I again want to thank my coauthor, Mr. ENGEL, and all of our bipartisan cosponsors for their support of this bill. It really deserves our unanimous support.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 400, the Trafficking Prevention In Foreign Affairs Contracting Act. I support this legislation because it enforces the implementation of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000.

H.R. 400 requires the Secretary of State and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to submit reports on definitions of placement and recruitment fees for purposes of enabling compliance with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000.

Indeed, the office of the Inspector General reported that a significant majority of the Department of State's foreign workers in certain Middle Eastern countries paid substantial fees to recruiters.

According to the Inspector General, "approximately one-half of the workers were charged recruitment fees equaling more than six months' salary."

Moreover, "more than a quarter of the workers reported fees greater than one year's salary and . . . fees that could not be paid off in two years."

The United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that USAID, the Department of State (DOS), and the Defense Department (DOD) should enhance and strengthen their oversight of contractors in order to better protect against trafficking in persons.

The agencies should develop more precise definitions of recruitment fees, and have stronger implementation strategies towards contracting officials in areas where the risk of trafficking in persons is high.

Indeed, out of the three agencies previously addressed, only the DOD committed to definitional recruitment fees and concurred with the United States GAO's definitional recommendation.

A proposed Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) rule that prohibits charging any recruitment fees to employees was noted by both the Department of State and USAID.

However, both the Department of State and USAID lacked an explicit definition for what constitutes a prohibited recruitment fee.

Without an explicit definition of the components of recruitment fees, the risk of debt bondages increase, prohibited fees are more likely to be renamed and passed, and other conditions that contribute to trafficking are more likely to occur.

I support this legislation because no later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, both the Secretary of State and the Administrator of USAID shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report that includes a proposed definition of placement and recruitment fees for purposes of com-

plying with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000.

Both entities will also include a description of what fee components and amounts are prohibited or are permissible for contractors or their agents to charge workers.

An explanation of how the definition provided will be incorporated into grants, contracts, cooperative agreements, and contracting practices will be required.

Both the 180-day period preceding the date of submission and the one year following the date of submission require a report of the description of actions taken.

Indeed, acknowledging the actions executed during the time periods provided ensure that officials responsible for grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements and contracting practices include the prevention of trafficking in persons in plans and processes.

These include agreements and contracting practices that relate to areas of the world in which the risk of trafficking in persons is high.

In a 2011 CNN report, we learned about a federal agency filing a large human trafficking lawsuit.

The article discussed Thai workers who made their way to the nonprofit agency.

Some were approached by a labor contractor who offered what is said to be a lucrative job on a farm in the United States, but the would be workers unfortunately found themselves owing thousands of dollars in recruiting fees instead.

I support this legislation because it facilitates, establishes and monitors a strong system for submitting reports pertaining to explicit definitions of placement and recruitment fees, so foreign workers recruited from developing countries are not vulnerable to a variety of trafficking-related abuses.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 400, 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.

ELECTRIFY AFRICA ACT OF 2015

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 2152) to establish a comprehensive United States Government policy to encourage the efforts of countries in sub-Saharan Africa to develop an appropriate mix of power solutions, including renewable energy, for more broadly distributed electricity access in order to support poverty reduction, promote development outcomes, and drive economic growth, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 2152

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 "Electrify Africa Act of 2015".

SEC. 2. PURPOSE.

The purpose of this Act is to encourage the efforts of countries in sub-Saharan Africa to improve access to affordable and reliable electricity in Africa in order to unlock the potential for inclusive economic growth, job creation, food security, improved health, education, and environmental outcomes, and poverty reduction.

SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

It is the policy of the United States to partner, consult, and coordinate with the governments of sub-Saharan African countries, international financial institutions, and African regional economic communities, cooperatives, and the private sector, in a concerted effort to—

(1) promote first-time access to power and power services for at least 50,000,000 people in sub-Saharan Africa by 2020 in both urban and rural areas;

(2) encourage the installation of at least 20,000 additional megawatts of electrical power in sub-Saharan Africa by 2020 using a broad mix of energy options to help reduce poverty, promote sustainable development, and drive inclusive economic growth;

(3) promote non-discriminatory reliable, affordable, and sustainable power in urban areas (including small urban areas) to promote economic growth and job creation;

(4) promote policies to facilitate public-private partnerships to provide non-discriminatory reliable, sustainable, and affordable electrical service to rural and underserved populations;

(5) encourage the necessary in-country reforms, including facilitating public-private partnerships specifically to support electricity access projects to make such expansion of power access possible;

(6) promote reforms of power production, delivery, and pricing, as well as regulatory reforms and transparency, to support long-term, market-based power generation and distribution;

(7) promote policies to displace kerosene lighting with other technologies;

(8) promote an all-of-the-above energy development strategy for sub-Saharan Africa that includes the use of oil, natural gas, coal, hydroelectric, wind, solar, and geothermal power, and other sources of energy; and

(9) promote and increase the use of private financing and seek ways to remove barriers to private financing and assistance for projects, including through charitable organizations.

SEC. 4. DEVELOPMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE, MULTIYEAR STRATEGY.

(a) STRATEGY REQUIRED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The President shall establish a comprehensive, integrated, multiyear strategy to encourage the efforts of countries in sub-Saharan Africa to implement national power strategies and develop an appropriate mix of power solutions to provide access to sufficient reliable, affordable, and sustainable power in order to reduce poverty and drive economic growth and job creation consistent with the policy stated in section 3.

(2) FLEXIBILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS.—The President shall ensure that the strategy required under paragraph (1) maintains sufficient flexibility for and remains responsive to concerns and interests of affected local communities and technological innovation in the power sector.

(b) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall transmit to the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives a report that