

acres burned, and thousands of homes and businesses were destroyed by this year's fires.

Now, more than ever, it is critical that California's fire departments are fully staffed. SAFER grants provide resources for fire departments that struggle to meet their staffing needs, including Orange County Fire Authority in my district.

SAFER grants will undoubtedly help fire departments across the country meet the needs of their communities, while ensuring firefighters are ready and able to assist with wildfire suppression efforts.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to offer my sincerest condolences to CAL FIRE and the family of Cory Iverson, who tragically lost his life this past week battling the Thomas fire.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I have no requests for time, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. ABRAHAM).

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I strongly support the reauthorization of the United States Fire Administration, the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, the Fire Prevention and Safety Grant Program, and the SAFER grant program.

These programs are vital to protect the public and the Nation's firefighters. Recent trends have shown that fire safety and prevention remains a serious national concern. Data from the U.S. Fire Administration shows that, while there are fewer fires and fire-related deaths overall, fires are becoming more severe and costly in both lives lost and property damage per fire. The best-trained, best-equipped firefighters cannot always overcome the dangers associated with today's severe fires.

This alarming trend jeopardizes the economic health of our communities and our national goal of increased resilience to fire. Adequate funding for the brave men and women who fight fires is essential, but we must also be effective in reducing these trends by preventing the fire's ignition and growth, in the first place, through robust fire prevention.

I will work with the Science, Space, and Technology Committee to request that the U.S. First Administration and FEMA investigate the upward trend in fatalities and property damage per fire.

Mr. Speaker, I thank both Chairman SMITH and subcommittee Chairwoman COMSTOCK for their leadership and hard work on the reauthorization bill, and I hope to work with them to address these issues moving forward.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I urge passage of the bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to note that the International Association of Fire Chiefs has endorsed this bill.

I appreciate, again, the bicameral, bipartisan support we were able to bring together for the sixth year reauthorization—actually, the seventh year, also, for extra room there.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the United States Fire Administration, the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program, the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant program, and the Fire Prevention and Safety programs.

As an original author of these critical grant programs, I understand their importance to the firefighting community. It is often local firefighters who are the first on the scene before help from elsewhere can arrive. Our first responders provide immediate assistance to those in need; and these grants enable local firefighters across our nation to receive the training and equipment necessary to fulfill this important mission.

The proper training and equipment provided to local firefighters by the AFG and SAFER grant programs and Fire Prevention and Safety programs can often mean the difference between life and death.

It is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that it took so long for the House to act on reauthorizing these important federal grants. We have had nearly an entire year for the Majority to introduce a bill, have it considered in committee, and see action on the House floor. Or simply, we could have just considered S. 829, which passed the Senate by unanimous consent on August 2, 2017.

I even introduced H.R. 3881, a House version of the Senate-passed legislation and co-led a letter with 153 members of this House to show support for reauthorizing these grant programs. However, no action was taken to reauthorize these critical grant programs until today.

The bill before us today makes meaningful and technical changes to the administration of these grant programs. One important change this bill makes, that I know is significant to my home state of New Jersey and fire departments across the nation, is permitting the use of these grants to permit the use of grants to change the status of part-time or paid-on-call firefighters to full-time firefighters.

However, unlike the Senate bill, the bill before us today continues to have a dreadful sunset clause. Typically, the Congress sunsets programs to ensure there is an opportunity to review the importance of a program's continuation and that there is no waste, fraud, or abuse. Since the establishment of these fire programs, there have been no major issues with waste, fraud, or abuse—and we certainly cannot dispute the major benefits these programs provide. So it is a wonder why some are insisting on sunseting these critical grant programs in this bill.

This sunset causes needless anxiety, which many have been feeling this year as the House is only now reauthorizing these programs just two weeks before they're set to expire. This is a situation where states and localities and tens of thousands of fire departments across our nation are left wondering about the future of critical funding they rely on to keep their communities safe. This sunset is unnecessary and we should eliminate it.

It is not an understatement to say that the funding provided by these programs has saved countless lives. The federal resources these grants have provided fire departments with the equipment, training and staffing needed to swiftly respond to over 30 million calls annually. These programs also have improved firefighters' response capabilities and prevented numerous fires through safety programs targeted toward high-risk populations.

Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues Congressman PETER KING, STENY HOYER and DAVE REICHERT as co-chairs of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus and for their tireless work on behalf of our nation's fire service.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to encourage my colleagues in this Chamber to support the reauthorization of these critical grant programs.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. COMSTOCK) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4661.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

STEM RESEARCH AND EDUCATION EFFECTIVENESS AND TRANSPARENCY ACT

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4375) to provide for a study on broadening participation in certain National Science Foundation research and education programs, to collect data on Federal research grants to science agencies, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4375

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 "STEM Research and Education Effectiveness and Transparency Act".

SEC. 2. BROADENING PARTICIPATION IN STEM PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 12 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director of the National Science Foundation shall submit a report to Congress on the effectiveness of all National Science Foundation research and education programs for broadening the participation of women and other historically underrepresented individuals in STEM studies and careers, including—

(1) development or identification of performance metrics to evaluate such programs;

(2) information on student outcomes using all available data, including dropout rates, enrollment in graduate programs, internships or apprenticeships, and employment;

(3) identification of any data gaps for evaluating the effectiveness and outcomes of National Science Foundation programs to broaden participation; and

(4) recommendations for maintaining, translating, and disseminating outcomes data for STEM programs funded by the National Science Foundation.

(b) DEFINITION OF STEM.—In this section, the term "STEM" has the meaning given the

term in section 2 of the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010 (42 U.S.C. 6621 note).

SEC. 3. COLLECTION AND REPORTING OF DATA ON FEDERAL RESEARCH GRANTS.

(a) **COLLECTION OF DATA.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Each Federal science agency shall collect standardized record-level annual information on demographics, primary field, award type, review rating, budget request, funding outcome, and awarded budget for all applications for merit-reviewed research and development grants to institutions of higher education and Federal laboratories supported by that agency.

(2) **UNIFORMITY AND STANDARDIZATION.**—The Director shall establish a policy to ensure uniformity and standardization of the data collection required under paragraph (1).

(3) **RECORD-LEVEL DATA.**—

(A) **REQUIREMENT.**—On an annual basis, beginning with the deadline under subparagraph (C), each Federal science agency shall submit to the Director of the National Science Foundation record-level data collected under paragraph (1) in the form required by such Director.

(B) **PREVIOUS DATA.**—As part of the first submission under subparagraph (A), each Federal science agency, to the extent practicable, shall submit comparable record-level data for the 5 years preceding the deadline under subparagraph (C).

(C) **DEADLINE.**—The deadline under this paragraph is not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act.

(b) **REPORTING OF DATA.**—The Director of the National Science Foundation shall publish statistical summary data collected under this section, disaggregated and cross-tabulated demographically and by years since completion of doctoral degree, including in conjunction with the National Science Foundation's report required by section 37 of the Science and Technology Equal Opportunities Act (42 U.S.C. 1885d; Public Law 96-516).

(c) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

(1) **DIRECTOR.**—The term “Director” means the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy.

(2) **FEDERAL LABORATORY.**—The term “Federal laboratory” has the meaning given that term in section 4 of the Stevenson-Wydler Technology Innovation Act of 1980 (15 U.S.C. 3703).

(3) **FEDERAL SCIENCE AGENCY.**—The term “Federal science agency” means any Federal agency with at least \$100,000,000 in research and development expenditures in fiscal year 2017.

(4) **INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.**—The term “institution of higher education” has the meaning given such term in section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a)).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. COMSTOCK) and the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Virginia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 4375, the bill now under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 4375, the STEM Research and Education Effectiveness and Transparency Act, contains two provisions aimed at providing better information on how to make taxpayer-funded investments in STEM and research and development more effective, transparent, and fair.

First, the bill requires the National Science Foundation, for the first time, to report and make recommendations to Congress regarding the effectiveness of its research and education programs aimed at broadening the participation of women and historically underrepresented individuals in STEM.

This report will give Congress, the National Science Foundation, and other stakeholders objective information about what kinds of interventions and assistance are efficient, scalable, and effective.

In order to have a vibrant economy that provides opportunity and prosperity for all, we must be the leader in STEM fields. To do that, we need to develop the talent of all Americans. This report will help us focus resources on what works.

According to the Society of Women Engineers, which partnered with the Center for WorkLife Law at the University of California's Hastings College of Law, women represent only about 15 percent of the engineering workforce.

This is an important issue because studies have found that companies with higher female representation tend to achieve more and have higher profits. According to Catalyst research of Fortune 500 companies, firms with the most female representation showed a 35 percent higher return on equity and 34 percent higher return to shareholders.

Second, the bill requires all Federal science agencies to collect standardized information, including demographics, for each application received for research and development grants. Agencies are to submit the information annually to the National Science Foundation, which is directed to publish an annual statistical summary.

This information will provide better transparency to how taxpayer dollars are spent on research and scientists, who are involved in that research, across the Federal Government.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee, Ms. JOHNSON, for joining me in sponsoring this bill, which, as I mentioned, also applies to really getting a much more diverse workforce, and understanding that our diverse workforce is a strength; and by only embracing that strength, are we going to be able to have and lead in STEM throughout the world. So I appreciate Ms. JOHNSON's longtime commitment to ensuring STEM reaches into all communities and provides opportunities for all.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4375, the STEM Research and Education Effectiveness and Transparency Act.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be a cosponsor of this bill, and I thank the Research and Technology Subcommittee chairwoman, Mrs. COMSTOCK, for introducing it.

Research shows that the underrepresentation of women and minorities in STEM fields is not due to a lack of interest or motivation. There are real institutional and cultural barriers preventing talented individuals from realizing their dreams of working in STEM careers. We must better understand these barriers so that we may develop and support the most effective policies and programs.

H.R. 4375 directs the NSF to report on the effectiveness of current portfolio of broadening participation programs. This bill also includes one provision from my STEM Opportunities Act that requires all Federal science agencies to collect and report annually on data for all research grant applications and awards.

This would enable researchers to conduct a cross-agency assessment of the participation and success of Federal grant applicants across demographic groups. With information about the participation and success of women and minorities throughout the process of applying for Federal research funding, including such details as the award size, we can identify and root out any inequities that reflect implicit bias in the process.

This bill is a small, but important, step in the right direction toward ensuring equitable access to STEM education and careers.

I want to take a moment to advocate for this House considering my STEM Opportunities Act, H.R. 2653, in its entirety. That would allow us to continue the steps we are taking today to broaden participation in STEM in our country.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I thank Ms. JOHNSON for her work on this legislation in moving this forward. I know as I go around my district and I see young people, and I see the engagement of a very diverse population in STEM, this is really going to be the future of our workforce. It is exciting to be able to know that we will be able to have a small role in that today, to make sure that we are reaching everybody, because we cannot leave anybody behind with our need for more STEM resources, and to be able to make sure that we have that workforce of the 21st century. I know in Virginia alone, we have 34,000 or so cyber jobs that we are still looking for people

for. So this will help with that pipeline.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. COMSTOCK) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4375, as amended.

The question was taken.

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

Mrs. COMSTOCK. 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.

□ 1745

WOMEN IN AEROSPACE EDUCATION ACT

Mr. KNIGHT. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4254) to amend the National Science Foundation Authorization Act of 2002 to strengthen the aerospace workforce pipeline by the promotion of Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program and National Aeronautics and Space Administration internship and fellowship opportunities to women, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4254

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 “Women in Aerospace Education Act”.

SEC. 2. ROBERT NOYCE TEACHER SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—*The National Science Foundation Authorization Act of 2002 (Public Law 107–368; 42 U.S.C. 1862n et seq.) is amended—*

(1) in section 10(a)(3)(A)(iv), by inserting “, including research experiences at national laboratories and NASA centers” before the semicolon; and

(2) in section 10A(c)(4)—

(A) in subparagraph (A), by striking “and” at the end;

(B) in subparagraph (B), by striking the period at the end and inserting “; and”; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

“(C) providing internship opportunities for fellows, including research experiences at national laboratories and NASA Centers.”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—*The amendments made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to grants awarded on or after October 1, 2018.*

SEC. 3. NASA INTERNSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITIES.

Not later than October 1, 2018, the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (in this section referred to as “NASA”) shall institute a process to prioritize the recruitment of qualified candidates who are women or individuals who are historically underrepresented in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and computer science for internships and fellowships at NASA with relevance to the aerospace sector and related fields.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. KNIGHT) and the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. KNIGHT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4254, the bill now under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am taking this opportunity to speak on an important initiative to strengthen our aerospace workforce. H.R. 4254, the Women in Aerospace Education Act, directs the National Science Foundation through the Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program and NASA, to shape their fellowship and internship opportunities to encourage more women to get aerospace expertise while they are training to be teachers.

Female aerospace professionals must be placed in the classroom in greater numbers. A full fifth of U.S. aerospace engineers are of retirement age today. They are beginning to exit our workforce, which will create an enormous shortfall in our national security preparedness.

Meanwhile, women represent only one-quarter of all STEM workers and represent only about 15 percent of all aerospace engineers. We need to improve our STEM education pipeline—from ensuring STEM classes are available to students at a young age to encouraging young Americans to pursue STEM education all the way through to completing their degree.

But the gender gap that is so prevalent in this industry will persist until we make STEM and aerospace more inclusive of women and encourage women at a young age to pursue these fields.

Attitudes about career paths are formed at a very young age. The role models and leaders from which young women learn have an enormous impact on the decisions they make throughout their formal education as they enter the workforce.

I introduced the Women in Aerospace Education Act to make better use of some of the Federal Government's best teacher training programs to increase the number of women teachers who have seen, worked on, and can relate to the Nation's leading aerospace programs to young female students.

Robert Noyce scholars, who get teacher certification assistance from the National Science Foundation, are already, in small numbers, getting experience in NASA centers and the national labs.

Once they become certified and go teach in the K–12 system, they draw

upon the work they did on major public initiatives in science and technology. Schools love having Noyce program teachers because their strong positive attitudes about STEM are cultivated in the students. It will strengthen our STEM pipeline to enhance the connection between the Noyce scholarship program and our schools.

The second provision of this bill directs NASA to more actively promote its internship and fellowship opportunities to women or members of other historically underrepresented groups.

Together, the two provisions of this bill will help a necessary and fundamental shift in our education system in aerospace workforce.

I would like to thank Ms. ESTY for her help on this bill, and I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation.

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

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I rise in support of H.R. 4254, the Women in Aerospace Education Act.

I want to thank Mr. KNIGHT and Ms. ESTY for introducing this bill. Women continue to be woefully underrepresented in the aerospace sector. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, women made up only 8 percent of aerospace engineers last year. While we are inspired by the career of NASA astronaut Peggy Whitson, who holds the U.S. record for days in space, we must do more to ensure that successes like hers are the rule and not the exception.

H.R. 4254 will help address the underrepresentation of women at all levels in aerospace education and in the workforce by privatizing the recruitment of qualified women to apply for NASA internships and fellowships. Some of these women will go on to be STEM teachers, and others will have research or industry careers. They will all benefit from participating in the NASA programs, and I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

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

Mr. KNIGHT. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers. I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield as much time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. ESTY).

Ms. ESTY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Women in Aerospace Education Act. I want to thank my friend and colleague, Congressman KNIGHT, for working with me to address critical workforce needs and bridge the gender gap in the aerospace industry.

Mr. Speaker, quite simply, we do not have enough skilled aerospace workers in America, and the problem is growing worse. According to a 2015 Aviation Week Workforce Study, nearly one-fifth—one-fifth—of our aerospace engineers are now eligible for retirement. What is more, women only account for