

That is what has made last week's failure to vote in the House so disheartening. It is inside baseball, politics as usual, and it is not okay.

It is not okay to the millions of families facing soaring premiums and worse health care under ObamaCare, and it shouldn't be okay to any of us. We cannot walk away now without even a vote with so much at stake.

This debate has gotten really complicated, but to me, it is really simple. We need to do what we said we would do: keep our promise to the American people, and repeal this failed law with something better.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 5 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 5 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1701

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee) at 5 o'clock and 1 minute p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

REQUIRING THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY TO SUBMIT A REPORT REGARDING EMERGENCY OR DISASTER ASSISTANCE APPLICANTS AND GRANTEEES

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1117) to require the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to submit a report regarding certain plans regarding assistance to applicants and grantees during the response to an emergency or disaster, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1117

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

SECTION 1. ACTION PLAN TO IMPROVE FIELD TRANSITION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) shall report to the Committee

on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate regarding the plans the agency will undertake to provide the following:

(1) Consistent guidance to applicants on FEMA disaster funding procedures during the response to an emergency or disaster.

(2) Appropriate record maintenance and transfer of documents to new teams during staff transitions.

(3) Accurate assistance to applicants and grantees to ease the administrative burden throughout the process of obtaining and monitoring assistance.

(b) MAINTAINING RECORDS.—The report shall also include a plan for implementing operating procedures and document retention requirements to ensure the maintenance of appropriate records throughout the lifecycle of the emergency or disaster.

(c) NEW TECHNOLOGIES.—Finally, the report shall identify new technologies that further aid the disaster workforce in partnering with State, local, and tribal governments and private nonprofits in the wake of a disaster or emergency to educate, assist, and inform applicants on the status of their emergency or disaster assistance applications and projects.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BARLETTA) and the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1117, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I have seen firsthand in my district how disasters devastate communities and their citizens. In the aftermath of these disasters, while facing the devastation and the daunting task of recovery, many communities encounter even more challenges caused by FEMA, which has been sent there to help.

I continue to hear from my colleagues in Congress about conflicting guidance received from FEMA officials, who constantly change on the ground. I have heard stories of lost documents, lengthy delays, and huge administrative burdens placed on communities doing their best to recover from disasters. And in the worst cases, the guidance provided by FEMA results in the community losing disaster assistance.

Unfortunately, in Missouri, they have faced many of these challenges following floods in August 2013. Congresswoman HARTZLER has taken the lead to push FEMA to fix these issues by introducing this bill. I am proud that we are moving H.R. 1117.

One of my focuses as chair of the subcommittee is how we can make disaster assistance programs more effective and efficient and ensure the wise investment of taxpayer dollars. H.R. 1117 will certainly help us do that.

This legislation helps communities struggling to recover from disasters by improving transparency, consistency, and communication with FEMA. It also requires FEMA to leverage technologies to ease the administrative burden on local governments for maintaining documents, applying for assistance, and providing information to FEMA to speed recovery. The House adopted similar language last year when it passed the FEMA Disaster Assistance Reform Act.

Again, I commend the gentlewoman from Missouri for introducing this bill to ensure that those impacted by disasters are receiving accurate, up-to-date information about their assistance and the status of recovery.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1117 to require the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to submit a report on how it will improve field staff transition.

As the gentleman from Pennsylvania has explained, there has been a good deal of confusion with high turnover, repetitive and lost paperwork, and inconsistent guidance.

FEMA has implemented several new technologies to manage its full-time employees, but they have not made similar efforts for field and temporary disaster response personnel. It is time for FEMA to do so.

This bill requires FEMA to submit a report on how it plans to address the disaster workforce issues, their continuing inconsistent guidance, and keeping appropriate records.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

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

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. HARTZLER).

Mrs. HARTZLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask all of my colleagues for their support of H.R. 1117, the FEMA Relief Improvement Act, which will require the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, to refocus their efforts on the core of their mission, which is helping people recover from grave loss in the aftermath of a natural disaster.

In August of 2013, as the chairman and the ranking member mentioned, the southern portion of my district experienced a major disaster involving heavy flooding which devastated infrastructure, and it caused significant hardship for many of my constituents.

Unfortunately, the Federal recovery efforts to this devastated region added insult to injury. Local officials dealt with multiple uncoordinated teams conducting duplicative site visits due to lost paperwork, inconsistent messages between various survey and evaluation teams, and unnecessarily long

delays in recovery and reimbursement. Such a response to any disaster is unacceptable, and change is necessary.

As I work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, I have learned that these issues are not unique to central Missouri. I have worked diligently with Chairman BARLETTA in crafting this bill to call attention to and to rectify FEMA's shortcomings.

This legislation is designed to address the deficiencies of the FEMA response to the 2013 flooding in my district to ensure future disaster recoveries in Missouri and elsewhere are as painless and efficient as possible.

Specifically, this bill requires FEMA to create an action plan to address inconsistent guidance, to establish appropriate recordkeeping procedures, and to improve overall assistance to local officials.

Additionally, this simple bill directs FEMA to issue a forward-looking report to identify new technologies that could further aid the disaster workforce in partnering with private nonprofits as well as State and local governments in the wake of a disaster or an emergency.

FEMA processes need to be streamlined and consistent in order to help those recovering from a disaster feel supported and assured relief will come in a timely, efficient manner.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to bring the certainty and the assurances of quick relief to all of our constituents because they deserve the best. I ask my colleagues to join me in support of H.R. 1117, the FEMA Relief Improvement Act, which passed by voice vote out of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in February.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Chairmen SHUSTER and BARLETTA and Ranking Members DEFazio and JOHNSON, as well as their staffs, for working with me in this bipartisan, common-sense effort to make the people get the help and assistance they so desperately need in times of crisis.

Mr. Speaker, again, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1117.

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 1117.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BARLETTA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1117, as amended.

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. BARLETTA. 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.

DISASTER SIMPLIFIED ASSISTANCE VALUE ENHANCEMENT ACT

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1214) to require the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to conduct a program to use simplified procedures to issue public assistance for certain projects under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1214

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 "Disaster Simplified Assistance Value Enhancement Act" or the "Disaster SAVE Act".

SEC. 2. SIMPLIFIED PROCEDURE PROGRAM.

(a) THRESHOLD.—The Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency shall immediately establish the threshold for eligibility pursuant to section 422(b)(2) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5189(b)(2)) at \$500,000.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than May 1, 2021, the Administrator shall submit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a report containing the results of a comprehensive review of the program conducted under section 422 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5189), as modified by this section, to include an assessment of cost-effectiveness, speed of recovery, capacity of the grantees, past performance, and accountability measures.

(c) SUNSET.—This Act shall expire on September 30, 2021.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BARLETTA) and the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFazio) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1214, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of H.R. 1214, the Disaster SAVE Act, is to speed up small disaster reconstruction projects and lower their costs by removing red tape.

One of my biggest priorities since becoming chairman of the subcommittee has been reducing disaster costs and losses and reducing disaster risks. I was mayor for 11 years, and I saw so many friends' and neighbors' businesses and communities impacted by disasters.

One of the things I hear most often from my colleagues in Congress is frustration about inconsistent guidance from FEMA and funding take backs, even when there is no evidence of misuse. If you have ever had a big disaster in your district, you know exactly what I am talking about.

In my district, FEMA reversed its prior approval and has been fighting for years with the local government over whether or not they should have paved a temporary access road that was built after a major flood. The cost of the gravel road was \$230,000. The extra cost to pave it, which the community covered with its own funds, was about \$50,000.

The amount of money FEMA has wasted in salaries, administration, and legal fees trying to take back the \$230,000 likely exceeds the entire project cost. This is red tape out of control, and it doesn't serve the taxpayers well. We know there is a better way to manage these projects.

Under current law, FEMA runs projects under \$130,000 in a manner similar to an insurance settlement. FEMA reviews the damage, makes a cost estimate, and issues a repair grant. The local government is responsible for managing the grant on time and on budget.

In exchange, they have greater flexibility in how they bill back, and they can enhance a project with their own funds. This approach dramatically cuts administrative costs, rebuilds infrastructure faster, eliminates the cost overruns for Federal taxpayers, and gives local governments the flexibility to rebuild in a way that best meets their needs.

The success of FEMA's small project program is well proven thanks to the prior efforts of the Transportation Committee. The former chairman of the subcommittee, from California, worked diligently to give FEMA the flexibility to administratively increase the small project threshold, which finally passed as part of the Hurricane Sandy supplemental package.

H.R. 2114, the Disaster SAVE Act, will raise the current project cap for this program from \$130,000 to \$500,000 and help all of our constituents avoid the project nightmare my district is experiencing right now. This will speed up rebuilding efforts and reduce disaster recovery costs.

□ 1715

The vast majority of FEMA's rebuilding projects are less than \$500,000, but FEMA continues to micromanage the administration of these projects at a tremendous cost in time and money. FEMA testified in 2015 that increasing this threshold would result in lower administrative costs, faster project completions, and fewer deobligations.

After 4 years, the program will sunset and Congress will decide, based on outcomes, lessons learned, and stakeholder input, if the program should continue or not. The House adopted