

What the American people want, what I heard in my townhall meetings, they want the government off their back so that they can make their own choices and live their lives the way they want to live them. This is really true with the millennial generation.

I have four children who are adults right now. They are millennials. They really want to have flexibility in their lives, and this bill, Congresswoman ROBY's bill, gets a little way toward that. I don't see why we would be against trying to give not just young workers, but all workers, that flexibility.

I have heard the arguments, and I have heard them several times now. I have just got to tell you, they make no sense to me. Perhaps they are something that made sense 50, 60, 70 years ago, but they don't make any sense in 2017. It is a different time. It is a different day. Let's give the workers of America some freedom and flexibility because that is what they really want.

Mr. Speaker, I again urge my colleagues to support House Resolution 299 and the underlying bill.

The material previously referred to by Mr. POLIS is as follows:

AN AMENDMENT TO H. RES. 299 OFFERED BY  
MR. POLIS

At the end of the resolution, add the following new sections:

SEC. 6. Immediately upon adoption of this resolution the Speaker shall, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1868) to provide that providers of broadband Internet access service shall be subject to the privacy rules adopted by the Federal Communications Commission on October 27, 2016. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. All points of order against provisions in the bill are waived. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions. If the Committee of the Whole rises and reports that it has come to no resolution on the bill, then on the next legislative day the House shall, immediately after the third daily order of business under clause 1 of rule XIV, resolve into the Committee of the Whole for further consideration of the bill.

SEC. 7. Clause 1(c) of rule XIX shall not apply to the consideration of H.R. 1868.

#### THE VOTE ON THE PREVIOUS QUESTION: WHAT IT REALLY MEANS

This vote, the vote on whether to order the previous question on a special rule, is not merely a procedural vote. A vote against ordering the previous question is a vote against the Republican majority agenda and a vote to allow the Democratic minority to offer an alternative plan. It is a vote about what the House should be debating.

Mr. Clarence Cannon's Precedents of the House of Representatives (VI, 308–311), describes the vote on the previous question on the rule as “a motion to direct or control the consideration of the subject before the House being made by the Member in charge.” To defeat the previous question is to give the opposition a chance to decide the subject before the House. Cannon cites the Speaker's ruling of January 13, 1920, to the effect that “the refusal of the House to sustain the demand for the previous question passes the control of the resolution to the opposition” in order to offer an amendment. On March 15, 1909, a member of the majority party offered a rule resolution. The House defeated the previous question and a member of the opposition rose to a parliamentary inquiry, asking who was entitled to recognition. Speaker Joseph G. Cannon (R-Illinois) said: “The previous question having been refused, the gentleman from New York, Mr. Fitzgerald, who had asked the gentleman to yield to him for an amendment, is entitled to the first recognition.”

The Republican majority may say “the vote on the previous question is simply a vote on whether to proceed to an immediate vote on adopting the resolution . . . [and] has no substantive legislative or policy implications whatsoever.” But that is not what they have always said. Listen to the Republican Leadership Manual on the Legislative Process in the United States House of Representatives, (6th edition, page 135). Here's how the Republicans describe the previous question vote in their own manual: “Although it is generally not possible to amend the rule because the majority Member controlling the time will not yield for the purpose of offering an amendment, the same result may be achieved by voting down the previous question on the rule . . . When the motion for the previous question is defeated, control of the time passes to the Member who led the opposition to ordering the previous question. That Member, because he then controls the time, may offer an amendment to the rule, or yield for the purpose of amendment.”

In Deschler's Procedure in the U.S. House of Representatives, the subchapter titled “Amending Special Rules” states: “a refusal to order the previous question on such a rule [a special rule reported from the Committee on Rules] opens the resolution to amendment and further debate.” (Chapter 21, section 21.2) Section 21.3 continues: “Upon rejection of the motion for the previous question on a resolution reported from the Committee on Rules, control shifts to the Member leading the opposition to the previous question, who may offer a proper amendment or motion and who controls the time for debate thereon.”

Clearly, the vote on the previous question on a rule does have substantive policy implications. It is one of the only available tools for those who oppose the Republican majority's agenda and allows those with alternative views the opportunity to offer an alternative plan.

Mr. BYRNE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. POLIS. 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 pro-

ceedings on this question will be postponed.

#### COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
Washington, DC, May 2, 2017.

Hon. PAUL D. RYAN,  
Speaker, House of Representatives,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on May 2, 2017, at 11:26 a.m.:

That the Senate passed S. 371.

With best wishes, I am,  
Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS.

#### 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.

The House will resume proceedings on postponed questions at a later time.

#### DISASTER DECLARATION IMPROVEMENT ACT

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1665) to ensure that the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency considers severe local impact in making a recommendation to the President for a major disaster declaration, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1665

*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 Declaration Improvement Act”.*

#### SEC. 2. LOCAL IMPACT.

*In making recommendations to the President regarding a major disaster declaration, the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency shall give greater weight and consideration to severe local impact or recent multiple disasters. Further, the Administrator shall make corresponding adjustments to the Agency's policies and regulations regarding such consideration. Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this section, the Administrator 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 on the changes made to regulations and policies and the number of declarations that have been declared based on the new criteria.*

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from

Pennsylvania (Mr. BARLETTA) and the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHNSON) 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. 1665, 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.

The purpose of H.R. 1665 is to ensure that, in making a recommendation to the President for a major disaster declaration, the Administrator of FEMA looks at the intensity of the impact in a localized area as well as the impact on other recent disasters.

My colleagues from Illinois are to be commended for working so persistently on this bipartisan piece of legislation. Their Illinois districts have been impacted by several devastating disasters, but each time the communities were told that the damage was not severe enough to warrant Federal disaster assistance.

In recent years, there has been more evidence of devastated small and rural communities not receiving disaster assistance in a fair manner compared to other larger communities and neighboring States. I know all too well how devastating this can be for those affected by disaster, as I am dealing with a similar issue in northeastern Pennsylvania.

In March, much of the area I represent was hit with a crippling snowstorm that dumped as much as 30 inches of snow or more. Municipalities had to exhaust much of their yearly budgets on snow removal efforts and emergency services. However, due to the fact that the statewide threshold needed for Pennsylvania to request reimbursement funding from the Federal Government was not met, local municipalities were left with massive holes in their budgets.

This bill helps ensure the severe, remote, and localized impact endured by communities like those in Pennsylvania and Illinois get due consideration and they get the help they need when disaster strikes. The House adopted similar language last year when it passed the FEMA Disaster Assistance Reform Act.

Again, thank you to the gentleman and gentlewoman from Illinois for working with the subcommittee on this legislation to address the concerns of their constituents and other communities in this situation. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

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

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1665, the Disaster Declaration Improvement Act, as amended, which will ensure that the severity and number of recent disasters are afforded greater weight by FEMA when making disaster declaration recommendations to the President.

This bill addresses an unfair situation where small and rural communities located in States with large populations are seemingly denied Federal disaster assistance because of the State's large population. We have seen instances where a storm inflicts similar damage in two communities of similar size located in different States, but the State with a lower population receives a disaster declaration while the State with a larger population does not receive the disaster declaration.

For example, in 2013, several counties in Illinois were hit by a tornado causing 6 deaths, at least 180 injured, and widespread damage. The same storm system produced tornadoes and caused damage in the smaller neighboring States of Missouri and Kentucky, both of which received disaster declarations, while the State of Illinois did not.

To be clear, the Stafford Act prohibits the denial of disaster assistance to a State or local community based on income or population. However, given some of the examples, it appears that that is precisely what is occurring. It is time for this to stop and to treat all small and rural communities fairly.

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

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS).

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman BARLETTA and Ranking Member JOHNSON. I also look over this House floor and thank my colleague, Mrs. BUSTOS, from Illinois, for joining me in this effort because, if you travel to my district or Mrs. BUSTOS' district in central and, in my case, southern Illinois and you ask my constituents about their opinion of FEMA's disaster declaration process, they are going to tell you that it is broken.

□ 1330

You don't have to look any further than the State of Illinois to see how FEMA's public assistance formula is failing hardworking families across this country because it simply does not put all communities on a level playing field.

In 2012, tornadoes devastated Harrisburg in southern Illinois, but the State was denied public assistance while Missouri and Kentucky received aid due to the damage inflicted by the exact same storm. Just a few short years ago, the towns of Gifford and Washington in central Illinois were denied public assistance as well, despite those communities suffering millions in damage. And just last year, Illinois was once again denied public assistance fol-

lowing extensive damage done in late December 2015 and early January 2016 caused by severe storms and flooding in the central and southern parts of our State.

Under existing regulations, FEMA currently takes into account several factors when determining the need for public and individual assistance. However, there is currently no standard to determine which factor is more important than another during the disaster declaration process. This leads to highly subjective and uncertain processes that leave States and communities in limbo for weeks as their application is considered.

By working with the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee last year during the markup of the FEMA Disaster Assistance Reform Act, we were successful in including important language based on legislation I introduced that requires the administrator of FEMA, when making recommendations to the President regarding a disaster declaration, to "give greater weight and consideration to severe local impact." This bill ultimately passed out of the House under suspension last Congress, but, unfortunately, the bill died in the Senate.

This Congress, I have introduced this language again, along with my friend and colleague from Illinois (Mrs. BUSTOS), as the Disaster Declaration Improvement Act.

Passing this bill will have a real impact on States like Illinois, where a large portion of the population is concentrated in a small northeastern corner of our State. Because of the population density in the northern part of my State, rural parts, where I live and where I represent, are having to meet an arbitrarily high standard in order to qualify for a disaster declaration. Enacting this language is going to help level the playing field and help ensure rural areas are given a fair chance when disaster happens and help is needed.

During our March markup of this bill, we also added important language that strengthens the bill by way of an amendment offered by my friend, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. GRAVES). This language also requires FEMA to place more consideration on recent multiple disasters, to take into account the cumulative impact such events can have. So I want to thank Chairman GRAVES for working with my office on including this language and for being a cosponsor of my bill.

I also want to express my personal gratitude to Chairman SHUSTER and Ranking Member DEFAZIO for working with us during the last Congress and this Congress, and for moving this bill so early. Again, I want to especially thank Chairman BARLETTA for being a cosponsor of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, central and southern Illinois just experienced another flooding event this past weekend. And while it is not yet clear what the damage is, it is clear that Congress must act to

ensure that folks get a fair shake if it is determined that Federal assistance is needed.

I urge a “yes” vote.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BUSTOS).

Mrs. BUSTOS. Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank my colleague, Congressman RODNEY DAVIS, for working with me to advance this long overdue legislation, which we call the Disaster Declaration Improvement Act.

This bill seeks to bring fairness to the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s disaster declaration process.

Right now, if a tornado, a flood, or any other natural disaster strikes a small town, like many of the ones I represent in the State of Illinois, FEMA’s current per capita formula leaves much of rural America behind. That is because FEMA’s current disaster assessment rules fail to take into account localized impacts on Main Streets and agricultural communities throughout our Nation.

This has left hardworking families in Illinois and rural States throughout the United States without access to the Federal relief they so badly need under these circumstances.

For instance, in my district, the city of Pekin was denied FEMA disaster recovery funding following a deadly tornado that had winds up to 120 miles per hour that ripped through the town in November of 2013.

Gary and Selena Cleer were in church on that Sunday afternoon when this tornado hit. They took shelter along with the rest of the congregation in the hallway to protect themselves. Finally, and with God’s blessing, they were able to drive safely home, and they didn’t even recognize what was in front of them. Much of their roof was gone, their garage had been torn away, and their battered car lay among all of the rubble.

The tornado destroyed about 200 other structures in this town of only 35,000 people. But this community received no public assistance dollars—zero. This was a direct result of FEMA’s disaster declaration formula, which, again, makes it unnecessarily difficult for Illinois’ smaller communities to receive the help that they need.

Mr. Speaker, we are not asking for a handout for rural America. In fact, in the Midwest, we are as resilient as they come, but we are certainly asking for a fair shake and the opportunity for all of our families to get the help that they need in a time of crisis.

A few million dollars of damage can devastate a smaller town or a rural community. That is why FEMA must give greater weight to the local impact of a disaster when making these decisions about the need for Federal assistance.

Our bill fixes an unfair formula that hurts too many of our smaller towns and villages across Illinois and across America. This bill had been included in

the FEMA Disaster Assistance Reform Act of 2015, but it sat in the Senate without any action. Today we are working together to pass it once again because we can’t solve this problem by ignoring it. I urge our friends in the Senate to take action.

With new flooding, damaging roads and infrastructure in places like Pekin, Peoria, and in southern Illinois where my friend, MIKE BOST, serves and where RODNEY DAVIS serves, I urge my colleagues to join us in supporting this bill so that we can help ensure that hardworking families from the heartland have the support they need to get back on their feet after a disaster.

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST).

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for yielding.

As we speak, communities in southern Illinois are contending with rising flood waters.

While we may not be able to prevent the water rising, there is a lot that we can do to help our communities rebuild following a disaster. Unfortunately, too many rural areas find that the help that they need is not there for them because of arbitrary Federal rules.

In my district, rural communities suffered significant damage from the 2015 holiday floods, but did not qualify for assistance because of these rigid rules. This legislation addresses these problems and ends the unfair treatment of rural areas.

It is better to ensure that FEMA gives greater weight to localized disasters when determining assistance.

I support the legislation authorized by my friend and Illinois colleague, RODNEY DAVIS, and cosponsored by CHERI BUSTOS, because the victims shouldn’t be punished for living in a small town in a rural area.

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

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. LAHOOD).

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1665, the Disaster Declaration Improvement Act. I thank my colleagues, Mr. BARLETTA and Mr. RODNEY DAVIS, for their leadership on this important issue.

Rural areas are the heart of not only my district, but of America as a whole. They are the source of food and resources, and are home to millions of American families. When natural disasters come to these communities, we should be doing everything in our power to help them get back on their feet. Instead, the regulatory regime forces these areas to meet a higher and unfair threshold in order to get the FEMA resources that they need.

My district faced this problem back in 2013, after a tornado swept through Washington, Illinois, destroying nearly 1,000 homes. This was a massive loss, but FEMA’s formula for public assistance kept Washington from getting the assistance it needed to repair the pub-

lic infrastructure damaged by the storm. While individuals could get some relief for personal property, this damage to infrastructure affects every member of the community.

This is why I am a proud cosponsor and supporter of H.R. 1665, the Disaster Declaration Improvement Act. This bill will change and modernize FEMA’s formula so that it is easier for rural areas and areas with lower population density to get the support and assistance they need after a disaster.

I urge my colleagues to vote for its passage today to ensure that all Americans, regardless of the town they live in, can know that help will be on the way after such tragic events happen.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. GRAVES).

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I want to commend the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS) and the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BUSTOS) for coming together to work in a bipartisan manner to address a problem that affects not just Illinois, but affects, I think, all 50 States. It is an issue where we have watched FEMA, in many cases, make decisions that appear to be arbitrary in terms of declaring a disaster in some areas, not in others.

What this legislation does, very simply, is it requires that FEMA take into consideration the true localized impacts of a disaster. And in line with what the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS) noted earlier, we did an amendment in the committee that also looked at, or required, FEMA to consider multiple impacts in an area.

I am from south Louisiana. In the last several months, we have had police shootings, we have had one of the most costly floods in U.S. history, we have had tornadoes, and we have had another flood in north Louisiana. In fact, there were two floods, as I recall. One of them was a 500-year flood, and the second was a 1,000-year flood. It makes me question how old I am sometimes.

But what this does is it requires that FEMA look at localized impacts, and that they take into consideration the cumulative impacts of various disasters and incidents in an area. FEMA is not there and the Federal Government is not there to take care of every problem and every disaster that States and municipalities have.

But in many cases that we have seen historically, they have missed opportunities. I think we have seen incredible burdens borne by local governments, and they have had disasters that far exceeded their capabilities.

I want to, again, commend the gentleman and gentlewoman from Illinois for offering this commonsense legislation, and I urge all Members to support the bill.

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

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote “yes” on H.R. 1665, as amended, and 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. 1665, 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, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

#### FEMA ACCOUNTABILITY, MODERNIZATION AND TRANSPARENCY ACT OF 2017

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1679) to ensure that the Federal Emergency Management Agency's current efforts to modernize its grant management system includes applicant accessibility and transparency, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1679

*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 “FEMA Accountability, Modernization and Transparency Act of 2017”.

#### SEC. 2. REQUIREMENTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency shall ensure the ongoing modernization of the grant systems for the administration of assistance under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.) includes the following:

(1) An online interface, including online assistance, for applicants to complete application forms, submit materials, and access the status of applications.

(2) Mechanisms to eliminate duplication of benefits.

(3) If appropriate, enable the sharing of information among agencies and with State, local, and tribal governments, to eliminate the need to file multiple applications and speed disaster recovery.

(4) Any additional tools the Administrator determines will improve the implementation of this section.

(b) IMPLEMENTATION.—To the extent practicable, the Administrator shall deliver the system capabilities described in subsection (a) in increments or iterations as working components for applicant use.

#### SEC. 3. NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS AUTHORIZED.

No additional funds are authorized to carry out the requirements of this Act. Such requirements shall be carried out using amounts otherwise authorized.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

□ 1345

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include any extraneous material on H.R. 1679.

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.

The purpose of H.R. 1679, the FEMA Accountability, Modernization and Transparency Act of 2017, is to enhance FEMA grant applicants' access to information.

I commend my colleague from Louisiana for working so hard for the people of his State to tackle the challenges those communities and individuals have been facing in the wake of last August's floods and other disasters.

On average, FEMA distributes almost \$6 billion a year in assistance to individuals, communities, and organizations impacted by disasters. That taxpayer money must be managed in an efficient and transparent way to prevent duplication and provide disaster survivors with needed access and visibility.

More efficient and transparent delivery of disaster assistance will help speed disaster recovery and reduce the administrative burden on applicants. This legislation requires the FEMA Administrator to include online access and information sharing as the agency modernizes its disaster grant delivery system.

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

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of H.R. 1679, the FEMA Accountability, Modernization and Transparency Act of 2017. Our State and local partners are the first responders to any emergency disaster or terrorist attack. They do an outstanding job, given their limited resources and irregular nature of the events to which they respond.

We need to make sure that our partners, States, local governments, first responders, and nonprofits have access to the latest equipment, technology, training, and other resources needed to address any gaps in preparedness and to ensure that they remain as responsive as possible in an emergency. To assist them in their efforts, the Department of Homeland Security provides several discrete types of preparedness

grants to help our partners meet the core capabilities needed to prepare our Nation for any hazard.

FEMA's 2016 National Preparedness Report found that much more work is needed in areas such as cybersecurity, economic recovery, housing, infrastructure systems, and supply chain integrity and security in order to meet our goal of being prepared and resilient.

Despite the valuable benefits these grants provide, President Trump proposed to cut funding for these grants in his so-called skinny budget. President Trump has proposed prioritizing a border wall over the lives and safety of our residents. I am pleased to note that this week Congress will be voting on an omnibus fiscal year 2017 appropriations bill that funds these programs at sufficient levels.

Since 2015, FEMA has been modernizing its management of these grant programs by making information technology platforms more user friendly. As FEMA continues to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its grants management, this bill will ensure that FEMA ensures that the system is more accessible and transparent to applicants.

The bill requires FEMA to include mechanisms to eliminate duplication of benefits and enable the sharing of information among agencies and with State, local, and tribal governments, where appropriate, while FEMA continues its modernization efforts.

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

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. GRAVES).

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the subcommittee chairman and ranking member for their assistance, and I also want to thank our lead cosponsor, Mr. SIREs of New Jersey.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is an unfortunate situation, that Congress actually has to step in. I want to give you a little bit of background.

In August of last year, we had once again what was known as the fourth most costly flood disaster in U.S. history. We had areas of south Louisiana that actually experienced over 32 inches of rain within about a 36-hour period. By comparison, the average American, as I recall, receives somewhere between 26 and 28 inches of rain in a year, and we received that in approximately 36 hours—an extraordinary rainfall event.

As you can imagine, in a 1,000-year flood event, you had thousands and thousands of people that were flooded, people living well outside of the floodplain. So, yes, there were thousands of people that were seeking assistance, trying to do everything from buy clothes to buy food, essential needs.

We assisted thousands of constituents trying to get information and answers from FEMA, but the way that