

the process worked is that you had to call an 800 number. If someone answered, they would log on a computer system and update the constituent on what their status is: if they received the application, if additional information was needed, if they were approved or denied.

I, myself, on many occasions called the 800 number just to see how long it would take to get through. In some cases no one would answer. In other cases, the questions couldn't be answered.

It is a very simple situation here, Mr. Speaker. This bill simply requires that FEMA establish an online database that citizens of this country can access directly. I can go right now and I can look at hotel reservations; I can look at airline reservations, train reservations. You can do virtually anything online. You can pay your utility bills. You can call an Uber. But with FEMA, they had thousands of employees that were there to answer phones to simply log on to the system.

There is no need for that step to be there. It is more efficient to get people direct access. I would rather see those FEMA employees helping us recover.

So I will say it again. I am disappointed that this takes an act of Congress. This is common sense, and you are seeing this type of innovation and utilization of technology happen all across the marketplace. Unfortunately, Congress has to intervene here, albeit in a bipartisan way, to make sure that Americans are getting the service that they deserve and to make sure that our taxpayer dollars are being used in an efficient way.

Once again, I want to thank the subcommittee chairman, Mr. BARLETTA, Ranking Member JOHNSON, and I want to especially thank the lead cosponsor on this legislation, Mr. SIREN of New Jersey, who I know has gone through extraordinary challenges in New Jersey with the 2012 Hurricane Sandy impacts on his State.

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. 1678, 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. 1679.

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.

ROBERT T. STAFFORD DISASTER RELIEF AND EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE ACT AMENDMENT

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1678) to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act concerning the statute of limitations for actions to recover disaster or emergency assistance payments, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1678

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

SECTION 1. STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 705 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5205) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(1)—

(A) by striking "Except" and inserting "Notwithstanding section 3716(e) of title 31, United States Code, and except"; and

(B) by striking "report for the disaster or emergency" and inserting "report for project completion as certified by the grantee"; and

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) in paragraph (1) by striking "report for the disaster or emergency" and inserting "report for project completion as certified by the grantee"; and

(B) in paragraph (3) by inserting "for project completion as certified by the grantee" after "final expenditure report".

(b) APPLICABILITY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—With respect to disaster or emergency assistance provided to a State or local government on or after January 1, 2004—

(A) no administrative action may be taken to recover a payment of such assistance after the date of enactment of this Act if the action is prohibited under section 705(a)(1) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5205(a)(1)), as amended by subsection (a); and

(B) any administrative action to recover a payment of such assistance that is pending on such date of enactment shall be terminated if the action is prohibited under section 705(a)(1) of that Act, as amended by subsection (a).

(2) LIMITATION.—This section, including the amendments made by this section, may not be construed to invalidate or otherwise affect any administration action completed before the date of enactment of this Act.

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 have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1678, 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. 1678 is to establish a statute of limitations for FEMA

to recover disaster assistance payments. This bill would provide some finality in disaster assistance, and it would minimize administrative costs.

This is a bipartisan issue, and I appreciate my colleagues from Florida for their continued leadership on this issue.

H.R. 1678 reinstates the 3-year statute of limitations on FEMA's ability to reclaim funds when there is no evidence of fraud, waste, or abuse.

In my district, I have seen FEMA tell a community that a project is eligible for funding, allowing the town to move forward to complete a disaster recovery project, only to have FEMA change its mind years later and take the money back. Not only is this devastating to the community and to disaster recovery, but the administrative time and red tape involved in second-guessing is a waste of taxpayer dollars.

Again, my thanks to the gentlewoman from Florida and the gentleman from Florida for their continued work on this issue and for introducing this bill.

The House adopted similar language last year when it passed the FEMA Disaster Assistance Reform Act.

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 rise in support of H.R. 1678, as amended.

I am pleased and proud to yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. FRANKEL), the author and sponsor of this legislation.

Ms. FRANKEL of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. JOHNSON for yielding, and I also want to thank Chairmen SHUSTER and BARLETTA and Ranking Members DEFAZIO and JOHNSON for their continued support.

I have had the honor of working on this legislation with my friends from Florida: Congressmen DAN WEBSTER, BRIAN MAST, and FREDERICA WILSON.

I have said this before and I am going to say it again: Florida knows hurricanes. In 2004 and 2005, Charley, Frances, Jeanne, Wilma, and Katrina tore through our State, leaving families stranded and property damaged.

I was the mayor of the city of West Palm Beach when we saw trees crash to the ground, ripping power lines and blocking flooded streets. Water systems were compromised, and our local governments, around the clock, did a miraculous job cleaning debris, fixing broken infrastructure, and getting life back to normal. It takes a lot to get it done.

When hurricanes strike, communities are ravaged, and so are their budgets. So I want to first thank FEMA for the funding assistance it provided Florida in a great time of need. With that said, FEMA is now asking some of our cities and counties to pay back money that was given for disaster relief projects that were approved more than 10 years ago.

There is no question that FEMA should do a responsible audit and make sure that money is used properly. However, the process should not be an endless journey into the Federal bureaucracy. Our local governments cannot afford to wait an infinite number of years for FEMA to do its assessment, especially when millions of dollars are at stake.

The current practice stymies our local governments' ability to plan their future budgets, and, unlike the Federal Government, they can't run a deficit. So this bill would make sure that the process is more evenhanded, giving FEMA adequate time to review its grant payments while allowing for the financial security of our local governments.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this very good legislation, and I urge the Senate to take action.

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MAST).

Mr. MAST. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend from Pennsylvania for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to recognize my committee colleagues from the great State of Florida, Ms. FRANKEL and Mr. WEBSTER, on promoting this important piece of legislation. I am very proud to be a cosponsor of this bill.

There is no question for Florida that the emergency management capabilities are among the best in the Nation, but some disasters are even beyond what we can handle and what we can handle in an effective and timely manner.

Right now in our State, we are battling wildfires across the State. We are on the eve of a brand-new hurricane season which happens year after year. These FEMA disaster relief programs are necessary, they are critical, and they are one of the most important responsibilities of the Federal Government to help States and their citizenry recover; but, unfortunately, there is an issue going on.

Many counties in south Florida are still fighting to this day with FEMA to defend the legitimacy of disaster relief aid that they received following one of the worst hurricane seasons in our State's history, where hurricane after hurricane after hurricane crossed the shores of Florida.

Mr. Speaker, victims of a disaster or a national emergency who may not even have shelter over their heads—or food or water or basic necessities—should not be victimized again by their own government just because they lack the paper trail from decades ago when they were undergoing this sort of devastation in their life. By reinstating a 3-year statute of limitations on the reclamation of funds, when there is no evidence of fraud, no evidence of waste, no evidence of abuse, this bill moves more of the onus for recordkeeping and combating fraud away from relief recipients and back to where it belongs,

back on to FEMA, and during that time when it is most essential, immediately after the recovery process. Mr. Speaker, I think that is just common sense.

Once again, I fully support this bipartisan bill, and I commend Chairman SHUSTER and Chairman BARLETTA for their assistance in getting this important bill to the floor.

□ 1400

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1678, which I rise in support of, is a bill that will clarify the existing statute of limitations for public assistance provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, to State, tribal, and local grantees.

Pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, or the Stafford Act, FEMA provides public assistance grants to State, tribal, and local governments to assist in their recovery efforts after a disaster strikes.

Generally, FEMA approves the use for public assistance funds immediately after the disaster or while the project is being completed. This is the appropriate time to decide how a grantee should spend disaster funds.

Once the project is completed, the grantee submits documentation of completion to FEMA. However, in some instances, FEMA or the inspector general has reviewed projects many years or even a decade after the grantee has submitted project completion documents. At times, FEMA has changed its policy determination on the appropriate use of the funds, or the inspector general has second-guessed FEMA's decision on the appropriate use of the funds. FEMA then tries to recover project funds years later.

Under this bill introduced by Congresswoman FRANKEL, FEMA may still attempt to recover funds but must do so within 3 years after the project is completed. I commend Representative FRANKEL for her commitment to address this issue. She has worked tirelessly to bring this matter to the forefront.

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

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I again urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 1678, as amended.

Mr. Speaker, 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. 1678, 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.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, proceedings will resume on questions previously postponed.

Votes will be taken in the following order:

Ordering the previous question on House Resolution 299;

Adopting House Resolution 299, if ordered; and

Suspending the rules and passing H.R. 1679.

The first electronic vote will be conducted as a 15-minute vote. Remaining electronic votes will be conducted as 5-minute votes.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1180, WORKING FAMILIES FLEXIBILITY ACT OF 2017; PROVIDING FOR PROCEEDINGS DURING THE PERIOD FROM MAY 5, 2017, THROUGH MAY 15, 2017; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on ordering the previous question on the resolution (H. Res. 299) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1180) to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide compensatory time for employees in the private sector; providing for proceedings during the period from May 5, 2017, through May 15, 2017; and for other purposes, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

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

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 233, nays 190, not voting 7, as follows:

[Roll No. 240]

YEAS—233

| | | |
|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| Abraham | Brat | Conaway |
| Aderholt | Bridenstine | Cook |
| Allen | Brooks (AL) | Costello (PA) |
| Amash | Brooks (IN) | Cramer |
| Arrington | Buchanan | Crawford |
| Babin | Buck | Culberson |
| Bacon | Bucshon | Curbelo (FL) |
| Banks (IN) | Budd | Davidson |
| Barletta | Burgess | Davis, Rodney |
| Barr | Byrne | Denham |
| Barton | Calvert | Dent |
| Bergman | Carter (GA) | DeSantis |
| Biggs | Carter (TX) | DesJarlais |
| Bilirakis | Chabot | Diaz-Balart |
| Bishop (MI) | Cheney | Donovan |
| Bishop (UT) | Coffman | Duffy |
| Black | Cole | Duncan (SC) |
| Blackburn | Collins (GA) | Duncan (TN) |
| Blum | Collins (NY) | Dunn |
| Bost | Comer | Emmer |
| Brady (TX) | Comstock | Estes (KS) |