

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding and for his kind words. I thank Mr. RUSSELL also for his very kind words.

The bill before us, the Federal Intern Protection Act, would close a loophole in Federal employment law that currently leaves unpaid interns open to discrimination and sexual harassment with no legal recourse. It is interesting. As I listened to Mr. CONNOLLY, he is absolutely right: it is surprising that they don't already have this protection.

Last year, the Oversight and Government Reform Committee held a hearing at which we heard testimony about sexual harassment and retaliation in an EPA regional office. During the hearing, both Chairman CHAFFETZ and I expressed our disgust at the exploitation of these young women and demanded action to prevent this abuse in the future.

Unfortunately, the act of harassing unpaid interns on the basis of race, religion, age, or, in this case, sex is not prohibited by Federal law. Under current law, victims rely on the discretion of managers to prevent this behavior, which is something that doesn't always occur.

As one witness testified before our committee: "Even after finding out about the numerous harassment victims, the direct reporting manager continued to feed the harasser a steady diet of young women."

That is a very sad commentary. As I have often said, we are better than that.

We saw at our hearing that allowing this kind of behavior to go unchecked can have serious consequences on the lives and careers of those who are interested in government service. What we want to do is encourage young people to come into government service. We want them to come in and do what will feed their souls by making life better for the general population. The last thing we want to do is anything that would cause them to say this is something they don't want to do.

Many interns are willing to work for the Federal Government without receiving any pay. That is the other piece: so many of these young people come looking for experience, looking for opportunity. They simply want a chance to get their foot in the door. We must protect them from this kind of despicable behavior. Our bill will afford Federal interns protections in the same manner and to the same extent as Federal employees.

I want to take this moment to thank the chairman for moving this bill expeditiously through our committee, where it was adopted unanimously, and for bringing it to the floor today.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, again, I want to laud my friend from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) for his perspicacity in ferreting out this issue. It is a very important one.

The use of internships in the Federal Government is a very underutilized tool when compared to the private sector. Many private sector companies will use internships for recruiting the talent it needs for the future. In many cases, 70 to 80 percent of those who intern for private sector corporations end up being hired because they have a carefully monitored program from orientation and recruitment to the tasks at hand during the pendency of the internship. The Federal Government does no such thing systematically.

At the very beginning, if we are going to use internships as creatively as the private sector to recruit the next generation of Federal employees, since one-third of the current workforce is eligible for retirement over the next several years, we have to follow the lead my friends, Mr. CUMMINGS of Maryland and Mr. RUSSELL of Oklahoma, have just given us, and that is to make sure it is a safe workplace. Otherwise, who would be attracted to it?

This piece of legislation is critical to our making Federal internships a meaningful tool in their recruitment and retention, so long as that workforce is protected by the same norms and same regulations as any Federal employee.

I thank my friend, Mr. CUMMINGS, for bringing this to our attention, and I thank Mr. RUSSELL for his leadership.

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

Mr. RUSSELL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of the bill. I thank Mr. CUMMINGS for his hard work on this measure. I also thank the committee for their broad, bipartisan, unanimous support and hard work in bringing this practical measure. I urge adoption of it.

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 Oklahoma (Mr. RUSSELL) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 653.

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.

IMPROVING FUSION CENTERS' ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT

Mr. KATKO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2169) to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to enhance information sharing in the Department of Homeland Security State, Local, and Regional Fusion Center Initiative, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2169

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 "Improving Fusion Centers' Access to Information Act".

SEC. 2. ENHANCED INFORMATION SHARING IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY STATE, LOCAL, AND REGIONAL FUSION CENTER INITIATIVE.

Subsection (b) of section 210A of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 124h) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (2), by inserting before the semicolon at the end the following: "and conduct outreach to such fusion centers to identify any gaps in information sharing and consult with other Federal agencies to develop methods to address such gaps, as appropriate";

(2) by redesignating paragraphs (3) through (12) as paragraphs (4) through (13), respectively; and

(3) by inserting after paragraph (2) the following new paragraph:

"(3) identify Federal databases and datasets, including databases and datasets used, operated, or managed by Department components, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Department of the Treasury, that are appropriate, in accordance with Federal laws and policies, to address any gaps identified pursuant to paragraph (2), for inclusion in the information sharing environment and coordinate with the appropriate Federal agency to deploy or access such databases and datasets;".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. KATKO) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. VELA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. KATKO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include any extraneous materials on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2169, the Improving Fusion Centers' Access to Information Act.

In the years since 9/11, Congress and the executive branch have taken many steps to address information shortfalls and information-sharing shortfalls. However, we know that silos remain.

The purpose of H.R. 2169 is to ensure that the Department of Homeland Security is truly serving as a State and local information-sharing advocate, as originally intended by the Homeland Security Act.

This bill requires the DHS to regularly review information-sharing efforts with the National Network of Fusion Centers and then work with other Federal agencies to close any identified gaps.

State and local fusion centers have grown in maturity and number during the last 16 years since 9/11. There are now 78 fusion centers within the national network. As the network has matured, fusion centers have established themselves as a critical conduit

for sharing terrorism, homeland security, and criminal information with Federal, State, local, tribal, and territorial partners. As the threat environment continues to evolve, it is vital they have access to the tools and information systems to stay ahead of threats to the homeland.

Despite existing requirements for DHS to share intelligence and information with State and local entities, I have found that the Department does not regularly assess if fusion centers have access to necessary information or databases held by other Federal agencies. H.R. 2169 addresses this deficiency by requiring the Secretary to conduct outreach to the fusion centers to identify information-sharing gaps and work with the appropriate Federal agencies to address these gaps.

Additionally, the Secretary is required to identify Federal databases and datasets that should be included in the information-sharing environment and coordinate with the appropriate Federal agency to deploy such systems.

H.R. 2169 includes input from the fusion centers, Department of Homeland Security, and other Federal agencies.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a letter from the National Fusion Center Association, and I am pleased they have endorsed the bill.

NATIONAL FUSION
CENTER ASSOCIATION,
April 28, 2017.

Re Support for H.R. 2169—Improving Fusion Centers' Access to Information Act.

Hon. JOHN KATKO,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN KATKO: On behalf of the National Fusion Center Association (NFCA), I write in support of your legislation—H.R. 2169—to enhance information sharing and analysis among fusion centers and federal agencies by encouraging appropriate fusion center access to federally managed information systems. As you know, the National Network of Fusion Centers (NNFC) is a focal point for analytical collaboration and information sharing on threats to public safety among federal, local, state, territorial, and tribal public safety agencies.

The NFCA has worked closely with DHS, the FBI, and other partners to develop strong information sharing pathways. We have made significant strides to improve daily working relationships with our federal partners. The flow of information from state and local public safety agencies to appropriate federal agencies continues to improve, and the same is true with information coming from federal agencies to local and state jurisdictions. We are also seeing enhanced analytical collaboration.

Still, challenges remain that should be addressed. Your legislation will provide important support in this effort by encouraging improved access to data from federally managed information systems that our analysts need to do their jobs in the most effective manner possible. It is crucial for Congress to consistently support a strong information sharing environment, and this legislation would assist in that effort.

We appreciate your dedication to effective information sharing and analysis and look forward to working with you to move your

legislation forward and accomplish our shared mission of protecting America.

Sincerely,

MIKE SENA,
President.

Mr. KATKO. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to report that H.R. 2169 is a very bipartisan bill that passed the Committee on Homeland Security unanimously.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2169, the Improving Fusion Centers' Access to Information Act of 2017.

Mr. Speaker, today we consider H.R. 2169, a bill that seeks to authorize DHS' State, Local, and Regional Fusion Center Initiative. The bill requires the Secretary of Homeland Security to carry out outreach to identify gaps in information sharing.

This measure highlights the importance of equipping fusion centers so that they can quickly adapt to the ever-evolving terrorist threat landscape. Congress has given particular attention to fusion centers and, in the 114th Congress, enacted measures to support fusion centers.

Fusion centers operate as State and major urban area focal points for the receipt, analysis, gathering, and sharing of threat-related information between Federal, local, and private sector partners.

I want to particularly highlight a provision of this bill focused on improving the interagency collaboration by requiring the DHS Secretary to consult with other Federal partners in order to develop new methods to address such gaps.

DHS must continue to address and improve the Nation's fusion centers' capabilities in gathering, analyzing, and sharing threat-related information between partners on every level.

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Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to again express my support for this bill and thank Mr. KATKO for his efforts in bringing this bill forward.

We live in a time when the threats we face as a nation remain complex, and this bill is an important tool to ensure our law enforcement professionals have the resources and methods to prevent and deter terror threats.

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

Mr. KATKO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I once again urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2169.

Before I close, I want to note that I routinely engage in bipartisan efforts on behalf of Homeland Security with Congressman VELA and others. The committee works in a very bipartisan manner to do what is best for this country to keep it safe, and this bill is one of those bills that helps keep our country safe.

It is critical that we ensure the proper flow of information to all law enforcement agencies, that they properly use that information, and that they have access to it on a regular basis no matter whether they are a local police officer who is working at a fusion center or whether it is an FBI agent. Everyone should have access to that information because we are all on the same team to keep this country safe.

I think our bipartisan efforts that we engage in with Homeland Security on a regular basis are a good example of the good things that happen in Congress. I am proud to be a part of it, and I am proud to have Mr. VELA as my colleague on that as well.

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

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, as a senior member of the Homeland Security Committee, I rise in support of H.R. 2169, the "Improving Fusion Centers Access to Information Act of 2017," which would enhance information sharing in the Department of Homeland Security State, Local and Regional Fusion Center Initiative.

This bill requires outreach to be conducted to fusion centers in order to identify gaps in information sharing and consultation with other Federal agencies to develop methods to address such gaps.

Additionally, it requires the DHS Secretary to coordinate with the heads of other federal departments and agencies to provide operational and intelligence advice to fusion centers and support their efforts to operate efficiently and effectively.

H.R. 2169 requires the Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) to ensure fusion centers have access to Homeland Security information sharing centers and that DHS personnel are deployed to support fusion centers in a manner consistent with the department's mission and statutory limits.

Fusion centers provide the means to local, state, and tribal law enforcement to bring together information from distributed federal and private sector sources for the purpose of collection, retention, analysis, and dissemination. The term fusion centers first coined by the Department of Defense (DOD) refer to the fusing of information for analysis purposes.

The Houston Regional Intelligence Service Center is a Fusion Center.

The mission of the Houston Regional Intelligence Service Center is to provide security to the Houston area by gathering, developing and sharing intelligence regarding the capabilities, intentions, and actions of terrorist groups and individuals which pose threats.

Houston hosted the 51st Super Bowl earlier this year and the Houston Regional Intelligence Service Center was on duty for this major national event.

This year's Super Bowl had:

10,000—volunteers;

140,000—visitors; and

1 million—people who participated in at least one Super Bowl event.

The Super Bowl took place free of incidents, which is a testament to the collaborative work of federal, state, and local law enforcement through the Houston Fusion Center.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is not only good for our country, but it also will greatly benefit the citizens of Houston, Texas.

If local law enforcement is given the proper resources, information, and intelligence, they will know how to properly handle terrorism threats.

H.R. 2169 will strengthen our economy while keeping our fellow citizens safe.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in supporting H.R. 2169 because the safety of citizens from potential threats is critical to the security of the homeland and strength of our economy.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. KATKO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2169, 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.

BORDER ENFORCEMENT SECURITY TASK FORCE REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2017

Mr. KATKO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2281) to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to reauthorize the Border Enforcement Security Task Force program within the Department of Homeland Security, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2281

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 ‘‘Border Enforcement Security Task Force Reauthorization Act of 2017’’.

SEC. 2. MODIFIED INSTRUCTIONS.

(a) UPDATED CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF UNITS.—Paragraph (2) of section 432(c) of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 240(c)) is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by striking ‘‘the Secretary shall consider’’ and inserting ‘‘the Secretary shall apply risk-based criteria that takes into consideration’’; and

(2) in subparagraph (A), by inserting before the semicolon the following: ‘‘, including threats posed by transnational criminal organizations’’;

(3) in subparagraph (C), by striking ‘‘and’’ after the semicolon;

(4) in subparagraph (D), by striking the period at the end and inserting ‘‘; and’’; and

(5) by adding at the end the following new subparagraphs:

‘‘(E) the extent to which the BEST unit would advance the Department’s homeland and border security strategic priorities and related objectives; and

‘‘(F) whether departmental Joint Task Force operations as established pursuant to section 708 and other joint cross-border initiatives would be enhanced, improved, or otherwise assisted by the BEST unit to be established.’’.

(b) PORT SECURITY.—Subsection (c) of section 432 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 240) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

‘‘(4) PORT SECURITY BEST UNITS.—A BEST unit established pursuant to paragraph (2)

with a port security nexus shall be composed of at least one member of each of the following:

‘‘(A) The Coast Guard Investigative Service.

‘‘(B) The geographically-responsible Coast Guard Sector Intelligence Office.’’.

(c) UPDATED REPORT ELEMENTS.—Subsection (e) of section 432 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 240) is amended to read as follows:

‘‘(e) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this section and annually thereafter for the following five years, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report that includes the following:

‘‘(1) A description of the effectiveness of BEST in enhancing border security, disrupting and dismantling transnational criminal organizations, and reducing drug trafficking, arms smuggling, illegal alien trafficking and smuggling, violence, and kidnapping along and across the international borders of the United States, as measured by crime statistics, including violent deaths, incidents of violence, and drug-related arrests.

‘‘(2) An assessment of how BEST enhances information-sharing, including the dissemination of homeland security information, among Federal, State, local, tribal, and foreign law enforcement agencies.

‘‘(3) A description of how BEST advances the Department’s homeland and border security strategic priorities and effectiveness of BEST in achieving related objectives.

‘‘(4) An assessment of BEST’s joint operational efforts with departmental Joint Task Force operations established pursuant to section 708 and other joint cross-border initiatives.’’.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. KATKO) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. VELA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. KATKO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include any extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of H.R. 2281, the Border Enforcement Security Task Force Reauthorization Act of 2017.

Mr. Speaker, we are living in unprecedented times. A quick glance of recent headlines shows that our Nation is suffering from the largest heroin epidemic in the history of the United States. In fact, just last week, Bloomberg Businessweek reported that heroin has become so pervasive in our cities and so profitable for the cartels that supply it that even our local law enforcement officers are disheartened and admit that sporadic street-level arrests seem to have little to no effect.

Recently, in my district and because of the hard work of our men and women in law enforcement, we witnessed the dismantling of a large-scale organization. News reports indicate 52

individuals are facing charges for about 370 crimes, including operating as drug dealers and traffickers.

Mr. Speaker, if these individuals had not been stopped, their nefarious activities would have broken the dreams of children across America, and their criminal enterprise would have caused millions in economic loss through increased incarceration, rehab, and medical expenses. If they had not been stopped, their actions would have continued to introduce poison into our communities and shattered lives.

Even worse, a recent trend shows that the heroin hitting our streets is becoming more lethal as drug cartels have now begun lacing heroin with fentanyl, a synthetic opioid making doses more addictive and cheaper to produce.

I might add parenthetically that, for 20 years as a Federal prosecutor, I prosecuted every possible drug organization known to man. I have never seen anything with the lethality that is heroin.

This epidemic is, in large part, due to the stream of illegal narcotics that is flowing across our Nation’s borders. However, there are steps that can be taken to shut down these illicit pathways. Thankfully, there is a Federal task force dedicated to this singular purpose.

In 2005, in response to the increase in violence along the southwest border of Mexico, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations, in partnership with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, as well as other Federal, State, local, and international law enforcement officials, created what is known as BEST, the Border Enforcement Security Task Force.

To date, a total of 44 BEST units have been deployed across 16 States and in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. My home State of New York is well served by three BEST teams, two of which are situated on the northern border and one of which I helped stand up in Massena, New York.

Nationwide, BEST teams comprise over 1,000 members who represent over 100 law enforcement agencies that have committed to jointly investigate transnational criminal activity along the southwest and northern borders and at our Nation’s major seaports.

Since inception, their collective efforts have initiated more than 10,654 investigations which have resulted in almost 13,000 criminal arrests, the seizure of 1.2 million pounds of narcotics, and more than \$130 million. The street value of 1.2 million pounds of narcotics is astronomical.

This is an impressive feat by any measure; however, as we are considering reauthorizing this important task force, it is important to highlight where there is some room for improvement. Every Congress looks at existing programs and makes adjustments when needed. That is exactly what we are proposing to do here today.