

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. HASTINGS. 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 question will be postponed.

□ 1400

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee). 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.

ENSURING RELIABLE AIR SERVICE IN AMERICAN SAMOA

Mr. LOBIONDO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 276) a bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to ensure reliable air service in American Samoa, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 276

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

SECTION 1. RELIABLE AIR SERVICE IN AMERICAN SAMOA.

Section 40109(g) of title 49, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (2), by striking subparagraph (C) and inserting the following:

“(C) review the exemption at least every 30 days (or, in the case of exemptions that are necessary to provide and sustain air transportation in American Samoa between the islands of Tutuila and Manu’a, at least every 180 days), to ensure that the unusual circumstances that established the need for the exemption still exist.”; and

(2) by striking paragraph (3) and inserting the following:

“(3) RENEWAL OF EXEMPTIONS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subparagraph (B), the Secretary may renew an exemption (including renewals) under this subsection for not more than 30 days.

“(B) EXCEPTION.—An exemption that is necessary to provide and sustain air transportation in American Samoa between the islands of Tutuila and Manu’a, may be renewed for not more than 180 days.

“(4) CONTINUATION OF EXEMPTIONS.—An exemption may continue for not more than 5 days after the unusual circumstances that established the need for the exemption cease.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. LOBIONDO) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. LARSEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LOBIONDO. 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. 276.

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

There was no objection.

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

I rise today in support of H.R. 276, as amended. This bill will improve transportation in American Samoa by making air service between its islands more reliable and predictable.

Specifically, the bill streamlines a burdensome Federal regulatory process that artificially inhibits economic growth and jobs on the islands. The Senate unanimously passed similar legislation in the last Congress, and I am hopeful they will join with us this year in addressing this issue.

I want to thank the sponsor of the bill, the gentlewoman from American Samoa (Mrs. RADEWAGEN), for her tireless efforts on behalf of her constituents and for working with us to bring a bill that benefits so many of them to the floor.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 276.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of H.R. 276, as amended, introduced by the gentlewoman from American Samoa (Mrs. RADEWAGEN), which will ensure reliable air service into American Samoa.

American Samoa is situated in the center of the South Pacific, about 2,500 miles south of Hawaii. Its nearest neighboring islands are at least 500 miles away, and the territory is more than 7,000 miles from where we stand today.

This remote location already makes export and travel difficult and costly. Complicating matters more is the fact that the current cabotage laws prohibit foreign air carriers from carrying passengers between the islands, except in certain emergency situations.

The Department of Transportation has authority to issue waivers in such emergency cases, but the waivers are good for only 30 days. A foreign airline that is otherwise fit to provide service between American Samoa's islands is, therefore, forced to apply monthly for a waiver.

H.R. 276 would remove this burden by permitting DOT to grant the cabotage waiver for up to 6 months. This change ensures that domestic air transportation is provided and sustained between the islands, benefitting both the people and the economy.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LOBIONDO. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the

gentlewoman from American Samoa (Mrs. RADEWAGEN).

Mrs. RADEWAGEN. Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank Chairman SHUSTER, Subcommittee Chairman LOBIONDO, Ranking Members DEFazio and LARSEN, and their staff for the effort and work they put in to quickly see this measure through this committee. They do an excellent job, and it is always encouraging to work with such bright people. I also want to thank Leader MCCARTHY and his staff for their assistance in getting this measure to the floor. I look forward to working under their leadership to bring prosperity to the American people, including those in the territories.

Mr. Speaker, the people of American Samoa desperately need improvement to their access to reliable transportation between the islands of Tutuila and Manu’a. The remote Manu’a islands are losing residents at an alarming pace, mostly due to the lack of reliable transportation; and it is causing a great hardship on the families and businesses who reside on these islands which lie 60 miles from the main island of Tutuila.

Also, the lack of reliable transportation poses a severe health risk to those who need emergency medical care, as the only hospital in American Samoa is in Tutuila.

My bill, H.R. 276, will help alleviate this issue by easing some of the burdensome red tape causing the issue, and I look forward to seeing it signed into law by the President.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from the Northern Mariana Islands (Mr. SABLON).

Mr. SABLON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 276, a bill to provide more reliable air service to the people of American Samoa for air travel within American Samoa.

The Northern Mariana Islands are similar to American Samoa in many ways. Although the large majority of our population resides on Saipan, I have also several thousand constituents residing on the islands Tinian and Rota. We are fortunate that air travel between these islands is possible with the presence of commercial air travel.

Unfortunately, in American Samoa, there are no U.S. carriers operating a route between Tutuila and Manu’a. So Polynesian Airlines, based out of Samoa, is the only carrier operating that route.

H.R. 276, introduced by my good friend and colleague, the gentlewoman from American Samoa (Mrs. RADEWAGEN), presents a commonsense approach to cut red tape and allow regular flights to continue between these islands. It would help the people of American Samoa conduct business, visit relatives, and access health care.

It has my full support, and I ask the House to pass this commonsense legislation.

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

Mr. LOBIONDO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Washington (Mr. LARSEN) and the staff for their help on this.

I urge all Members to support H.R. 276, as amended.

I yield back the balance of my time. The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. LOBIONDO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 276, 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.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. LOBIONDO

Mr. LOBIONDO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to amend the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amend the long title by striking "A bill".

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

There was no objection.

The amendment was agreed to.

FIRST RESPONDER IDENTIFICATION OF EMERGENCY NEEDS IN DISASTER SITUATIONS

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 58) to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to submit a study on the circumstances which may impact the effectiveness and availability of first responders before, during, or after a terrorist threat or event, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 58

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 "First Responder Identification of Emergency Needs in Disaster Situations" or the "FRIENDS Act".

SEC. 2. CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH MAY IMPACT FIRST RESPONDERS DURING A TERRORIST EVENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committees on Homeland Security and Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a report that describes select State and local programs and policies, as appropriate, related to the preparedness and protection of first responders. The report may include information on—

(1) the degree to which such programs and policies include consideration of the presence of a first responder's family in an area impacted by a terrorist attack;

(2) the availability of personal protective equipment for first responders;

(3) the availability of home Medkits for first responders and their families for biological incident response; and

(4) other related factors.

(b) CONTEXT.—In preparing the report required under subsection (a), the Comptroller General of the United States may, as appropriate, provide information—

(1) in a format that delineates high risk urban areas from rural communities; and

(2) on the degree to which the selected State and local programs and policies included in such report were developed or are being executed with funding from the Department of Homeland Security, including grant funding from the State Homeland Security Grant Program or the Urban Area Security Initiative under sections 2002 and 2003, respectively, of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 603 and 604).

(c) HOMELAND SECURITY CONSIDERATION.—After issuance of the report required under subsection (a), the Secretary of Homeland Security shall consider such report's findings and assess its applicability for Federal first responders.

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. 58, 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.

First, I welcome the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHNSON) to the committee. I look forward to working together to do good work for the American people.

Mr. Speaker, firefighters, police, EMS, and other first responders are critical to our Nation's emergency management system. First responders leave their own families, even during disasters, to protect you and me.

As recently as this past August, we saw devastating flooding in Baton Rouge and southeast Louisiana. The flooding touched every home, including the homes of firefighters, police, hospital workers, and other first responders. First responders focused on rescuing flood victims, while they knew their own homes were flooded and their own families were homeless.

This legislation would require a report on the State and local programs and policies in place to prepare and protect first responders and their families in times of disaster. Taking care of first responders and their families gives our firefighters, police, and other critical emergency personnel the peace of mind to focus on the task at hand, rather than worrying whether their family is safe and taken care of.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

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. 58, the First Responder Identification of Emergency Needs in Disaster Situations, or the FRIENDS Act.

This bill requires the Government Accountability Office, or GAO, to submit a report on how State and local programs affect the preparedness and protection of first responders. Congress and the American people need to know whether these programs consider circumstances that may affect a first responder's ability to respond to an event.

In particular, the bill requires GAO to examine the degree to which State and local programs and policies consider the presence of a first responder's family in an area impacted by a terrorist attack, the availability of personal protective equipment for first responders, and the availability of home MedKits for first responders and their families for biological incident response.

While we are asking GAO to examine State and local programs and policies, some of these programs and policies may be funded with Federal dollars. To that extent, Congress needs to know whether these federally funded programs and policies are as effective as possible to prepare and protect first responders.

This month, the State of Georgia received two Presidential disaster declarations from devastating tornados in districts neighboring my own. While these are not terrorist attacks, these tornados highlight the fact that first responders are often called upon to respond to events in their own communities where they and their loved ones live. Our heroes immediately respond to the call of duty, even though they themselves or their loved ones may be impacted. Thus, it is important that State and local preparedness programs are designed and developed to consider all situations that may impact first responder preparedness.

□ 1415

We must do everything we can to support our first responders who are often called upon to put their lives on the line to help others, even when their own families need them. So I thank my colleague, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE), for introducing this bill and for her diligent work on this issue.

In response to my chairman's welcome, I would have to respond by saying I am just giddy about being a part of this subcommittee, and I look forward to working with him and his staff to make things good for America and for our future.

I urge my colleagues to join in my support of this bill.

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

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

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE), the sponsor of this legislation.