

H.R. 519 is a key step towards solving this problem. It offers farmers and ranchers an affordable water supply; and in doing so, it supports not only our agricultural communities, but everyone in America who relies on farms and ranches for food.

My bill seeks to help farmers by empowering them to support each other. Many farmers rely on nonprofit, member-owned cooperatives to supply their water. These mutual irrigation and ditch companies give farmers ownership in their water supply. However, current IRS regulations prohibit these nonprofits from generating more than 15 percent of their revenue from nonmember sources. If they exceed this 15 percent threshold, they lose their tax-exempt status.

H.R. 519 responds by removing caps on how much revenue these water companies can raise from nonmember sources, allowing them, for example, to sell water access for recreational use or raise funds through crossing fees. The only requirement is that this revenue must be reinvested in maintenance, operations, and infrastructure improvements, keeping water prices affordable for the members and upholding the nonprofit ideals of the cooperative. With this financial freedom, mutual irrigation and ditch companies can continue to play a vital role in supporting our Nation's farmers.

The bill also reforms the IRS treatment of member voting eligibility for cooperatives, protecting mutual associations that have complied with State law for years. By empowering nonprofit mutual irrigation ditch companies to raise revenue from nonmember sources, H.R. 519 will reduce the cost of water for cash-strapped farmers.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the House to help our rural communities and, frankly, all of America by passing the Water and Agriculture Tax Reform Act.

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. Mr. Speaker, I have no other speakers, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to close, and I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the sponsors of this bill, in particular Congressman BUCK for his good work working with me to ensure that we were able to take care of some concerns that we had in the original drafting of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote for this piece of legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume for a very quick closing.

In a previous life, I was the treasurer of Maricopa County. We had 3,300 taxing districts in this county. A substantial number of those taxing districts were actually just these, irrigation and water delivery. Many of them were in the rural parts of my county, but a lot of them, you would be surprised, were actually in the suburban and even some in downtown Phoenix.

I have actually had a conversation with a couple of them, one asking if they had an excess water allocation that year, could they actually sell it to the local pond, the little conservation reserve in our riverbed, and those things; and if they did so, if that amount of money exceeded 15 percent of their revenues, would they blow up their tax status.

In this case, this legislation would prevent that, but they still have to use that money to constantly improve their infrastructure, therefore, I believe, being more water economical.

So this is a good thing for our communities, particularly rural, particularly the uniqueness of those of us in the desert Southwest.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes," and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. ROSKAM) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 519, 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.

ENSURING INTEGRITY IN THE IRS WORKFORCE ACT OF 2018

Ms. JENKINS of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3500) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to prohibit the Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service from rehiring any employee of the Internal Revenue Service who was involuntarily separated from service for misconduct, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3500

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 "Ensuring Integrity in the IRS Workforce Act of 2018".

SEC. 2. PROHIBITION ON REHIRING ANY EMPLOYEE OF THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE WHO WAS INVOLUNTARILY SEPARATED FROM SERVICE FOR MISCONDUCT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 7804 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(d) PROHIBITION ON REHIRING EMPLOYEES INVOLUNTARILY SEPARATED.—The Commissioner may not hire any individual previously employed by the Commissioner who was removed for misconduct under this subchapter or chapter 43 or chapter 75 of title 5, United States Code, or whose employment was terminated under section 1203 of the Internal Revenue Service Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998 (26 U.S.C. 7804 note)."

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to the hiring of employees after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 3. NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS AUTHORIZED.

No additional funds are authorized to carry out the requirements of this Act and the amendments made by this Act. Such requirements shall

be carried out using amounts otherwise authorized.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Kansas (Ms. JENKINS) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. NEAL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Kansas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. JENKINS of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 3500, currently under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Kansas?

There was no objection.

Ms. JENKINS of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, today we are taking up H.R. 3500, the bipartisan Ensuring Integrity in the IRS Workforce Act. This bill seeks to provide additional safeguards within the IRS by prohibiting the agency from rehiring any individual previously employed by the IRS but removed for misconduct or terminated for cause.

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Before we talk more about this bill, I would like to take a moment just to thank the bill's sponsor, Representative KRISTI NOEM from South Dakota, for her tireless work on this bill.

Last Congress, a version of this bill passed the House of Representatives with overwhelming, bipartisan support. This Congress, we made some small changes to the bill to address some of my colleagues' concerns and we hope that they will continue to support the bill in its new form. We are also encouraged to see its presence in the bipartisan Taxpayer First Act, introduced by chairman and ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee just last week.

As we all know, IRS employees have access to Americans' most sensitive information, such as our Social Security numbers, home addresses, and how much we are paid. Given the magnitude of the sensitive information that the IRS holds, hiring employees of high integrity is essential to maintaining public trust in tax administration and safeguarding taxpayer information.

In 2017, work by the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, or TIGTA, raised serious concerns about the IRS's continued practice of rehiring former employees with conduct and performance issues. The inspector general concluded that the IRS does not have effective hiring policies to fully consider past employee conduct and performance issues prior to making a tentative decision to rehire them.

I should note that this is the second such report that the inspector general has published. In 2014, the inspector general first alerted Congress to this

issue, finding that the IRS was rehiring former employees with significant conduct or performance issues.

So what types of conduct are we talking about here? We are talking about IRS employees who threatened their coworkers, didn't pay their own taxes, were excessively absent, falsified employment forms, or were so deficient in their jobs that the IRS had no choice but to terminate their employment. There were also instances where employees accessed sensitive taxpayer information without authorization to do so. I think we can all agree that those are not the types of people that the IRS should be seeking to rehire.

While Congress has repeatedly sought to signal to the IRS its concern on this issue through legislation such as the IRS Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998, and the IRS Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016, the IRS continues to struggle.

TIGTA's most recent findings suggest that further congressional action is needed. As a result, we have before us today a bill which will seek to guarantee that this practice does not continue. It also ensures greater integrity within the IRS's workforce, something that I think all Members of Congress can easily support.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, today's debate reminds me of the words of Will Rogers who used to say that: "The only difference between death and taxes is that death doesn't get worse every time Congress meets."

Although I concede that he had a point during most of the past year, hopefully, today will be an exception to the Rogers rule. That is because we are taking up H.R. 3500, a good bill that would prevent the IRS from rehiring employees who have previously been terminated due to poor conduct or performance.

I want to say at the outset that I know most, if not overwhelmingly all, IRS employees tend to be ethical and diligent public servants who have, in recent years, been asked to do much more with much less. That is exactly what the American people deserve and expect from them and we all appreciate those efforts.

The IRS employees collecting our Nation's revenue enable the Federal Government to support veterans benefits, pave roads, protect the environment, fund medical research, care for needy children, and meet all of the other needs our Federal Government asks. This is an enormous task, and we need intelligent men and women of integrity in those roles who will administer our Tax Code in a fair, even-handed, reasonable, and ethical manner. Most IRS employees meet this standard with the utmost attention to their professional responsibilities and we honor their contributions to the country.

When we learn of situations that fall short of those high standards or employees who have conducted themselves dishonorably, though, it is critically important to rectify the situation swiftly. Jobs at the IRS are positions of great public trust, and last year the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration alerted us to a practice of hiring individuals who had previously violated that trust.

During 15 months covering parts of 2015 and 2016, TIGTA found that the IRS hired almost 7,500 people, including 2,000 rehires. About 10 percent of the rehired employees, who were mostly seasonal workers, had been terminated or separated while under investigation for substantiated conduct or performance issues. Four of the more than 200 rehired employees failed to file their own tax returns. Four were under investigation for unauthorized access to taxpayer information. Twenty-seven failed to disclose a prior termination or conviction on their applications, as required.

Although these hires represent but a fraction of IRS employees overall, it is important that we rectify the situation swiftly and prevent this from happening in the future.

So I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 3500, and at the same time remind them that the outliers we are addressing today should not diminish our respect for the men and women at the IRS who serve the public with, I think, dignity every single day.

Mr. Speaker, let me thank those Internal Revenue Service employees for their hard work.

Mr. Speaker, I urge our colleagues on both sides to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JENKINS of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

In closing, I would like to point out that this legislation has enjoyed wide bipartisan support in the past, and for good reason. It is a commonsense bill that will help build trust with the IRS and integrity within our tax system.

I want to, again, thank my colleague from South Dakota, Representative KRISTI NOEM, for being a leader on this issue and for sponsoring this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 3500, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Kansas (Ms. JENKINS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3500, 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.

IMPROVING SOCIAL SECURITY'S SERVICE TO VICTIMS OF IDENTITY THEFT ACT

Mr. BISHOP of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and

pass the bill (H.R. 6084) to amend title VII of the Social Security Act to provide for a single point of contact at the Social Security Administration for individuals who are victims of identity theft, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6084

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 Social Security's Service to Victims of Identity Theft Act".

SEC. 2. SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT FOR IDENTITY THEFT VICTIMS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Title VII of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 901 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"SECTION 714. SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT FOR IDENTITY THEFT VICTIMS.

"(a) IN GENERAL.—The Commissioner of Social Security shall establish and implement procedures to ensure that any individual whose social security account number has been misused (such as to fraudulently obtain benefits under title II, VIII, or XVI of this Act, in a manner that affects an individual's records at the Social Security Administration, or in a manner that prompts the individual to request a new social security account number) has a single point of contact at the Social Security Administration throughout the resolution of the individual's case. The single point of contact shall track the individual's case to completion and coordinate with other units to resolve issues as quickly as possible.

"(b) SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of subsection (a), the single point of contact shall consist of a team or subset of specially trained employees who—

"(A) have the ability to coordinate with other units to resolve the issues involved in the individual's case, and

"(B) shall be accountable for the case until its resolution.

"(2) TEAM OR SUBSET.—The employees included within the team or subset described in paragraph (1) may change as required to meet the needs of the Social Security Administration, provided that procedures have been established to—

"(A) ensure continuity of records and case history, and

"(B) notify the individual when appropriate."

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BISHOP) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. NEAL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BISHOP of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on H.R. 6084, currently under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. BISHOP of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.