

As a long-time advocate of a government that works efficiently for the people, it is clear that current security practices protecting our critical infrastructure are neither sufficient nor consistent.

Without an honest effort to even get a obtain view of the security risks facing critical infrastructure assets we will continue to be increasingly vulnerable.

While conducting threat assessments like this will harden the security posture of the federal government and our critical infrastructure assets, we are still suffering from a shortage of workers with the requisite skills to secure them.

To address this, I have introduced the Cyber Security Education and Federal Workforce Enhancement Act (H.R. 1981), which would address our cyber workforce shortage by establishing an Office of Cybersecurity Education and Awareness within DHS which will focus on:

Recruiting information assurance, cybersecurity, and computer security professionals;

Providing grants, training programs, and other support for kindergarten through grade 12, secondary, and post-secondary computer security education programs;

Supporting guest lecturer programs in which professional computer security experts lecture computer science students at institutions of higher education;

Identifying youth training programs for students to work in part-time or summer positions at federal agencies; and

Developing programs to support underrepresented minorities in computer security fields with programs at minority-serving institutions, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, Native American colleges, Asian-American institutions, and rural colleges and universities.

Mr. Speaker, government agencies and the owners of critical infrastructure alike continue to struggle to identify the factors and technologies that put them at risk.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I urge all members to join me in voting to pass H.R. 6620, the "Protecting Critical Infrastructure Against Drones and Emerging Threats Act".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. McCAUL) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6620.

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.

SECURE BORDER COMMUNICATIONS ACT

Mr. McCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6742) to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to ensure that appropriate officers and agents of U.S. Customs and Border Protection are equipped with secure radios or other two-way communication devices, supported by system interoperability, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6742

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 "Secure Border Communications Act".

SEC. 2. SECURE BORDER COMMUNICATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subtitle B of title IV of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 211 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"SEC. 420. SECURE BORDER COMMUNICATIONS.

"(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall ensure that each U.S. Customs and Border Protection officer or agent, if appropriate, is equipped with a secure radio or other two-way communication device, supported by system interoperability, that allows each such officer or agent to communicate—

"(1) between ports of entry and inspection stations; and

"(2) with other Federal, State, Tribal, and local law enforcement entities.

"(b) U.S. BORDER PATROL AGENTS.—The Secretary shall ensure that each U.S. Border Patrol agent assigned or required to patrol in remote mission critical locations, and at border checkpoints, has a multi- or dual-band encrypted portable radio.

"(c) COMMERCIAL MOBILE BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY.—In carrying out subsection (b), the Secretary shall acquire radios or other devices with the option to connect to appropriate commercial mobile broadband networks for deployment in areas where such networks enhance operations and are cost effective.

"(d) EMERGING COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES CONSIDERED.—In carrying out this section, the Secretary may evaluate new or emerging communications technologies to determine their suitability for the unique conditions of border security operations."

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents in section 1(b) of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 419 the following new item:

"Sec. 420. Secure border communications."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. McCAUL) and the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. RICHMOND) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. McCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in 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 Texas?

There was no objection.

□ 1445

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Secure Border Communications Act.

Every day our CBP agents and officers serve on the front lines in the fight to secure our homeland. They face threats from armed drug cartels, dangerous gangs like MS-13, human traffickers, and potential terrorists.

These brave individuals take pride in serving with vigilance, integrity, and

professionalism in order to keep us safe.

To be successful, however, they must be equipped with the tools they need to do their jobs well. Too often, the communications devices and radios used by CBP officers and other agents are outdated and unreliable.

For instance, Border Patrol agents patrolling on the ground may not have direct radio contact with CBP air assets or other law enforcement officers working the area. This hinders inter-agency communications and jeopardizes their mission and safety.

At a subcommittee hearing earlier this year, a Border Patrol agent stated that she had been issued a radio that often failed. At times, she would need to communicate with a fellow agent but was forced to use her personal cell phone.

We cannot allow these kinds of technical failures to endanger the lives of our agents and weaken our national security. We must do better.

Fortunately, we can begin to fix this problem today. This legislation will ensure that CBP agents and officers are equipped with interoperable and secure radios or two-way communication devices.

In addition, this bill highlights the importance of reliable encrypted communications that will prevent powerful cartels from intercepting sensitive information, such as our CBP agents' and officers' locations.

Passing this bill is a simple step that we can take to help our CBP agents do their jobs and protect our homeland.

I would like to thank Congressman MAST for all his hard work on this issue. Congressman MAST is no stranger to service and sacrifice, serving overseas in our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and he has the scars to prove it. We thank him for his service. It is a great honor to have him sponsor a bill from our committee.

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

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS,

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Washington, DC, September 24, 2018.

Hon. MICHAEL T. McCAUL,
Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN McCAUL: I write to you regarding H.R. 6742, the "Secure Border Communications Act", on which the Committee on Ways and Means was granted an additional referral.

As a result of your having consulted with us on provisions in H.R. 6742 that fall within the Rule X jurisdiction of the Committee on Ways and Means, I agree to waive formal consideration of this bill. The Committee on Ways and Means takes this action with the mutual understanding that we do not waive any jurisdiction over the subject matter contained in this or similar legislation, and the Committee will be appropriately consulted and involved as the bill or similar legislation moves forward so that we may address any remaining issues that fall within our jurisdiction. The Committee also reserves the right to seek appointment of an appropriate number of conferees to any House-Senate conference involving this or similar legislation, and requests your support for such request.

I would appreciate your response confirming this understanding with respect to H.R. 6742 and ask that a copy of our exchange of letters on this matter be included in the Congressional Record during consideration of the bill on the House floor.

Sincerely,

KEVIN BRADY,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
Washington, DC, September 25, 2018.

Hon. KEVIN BRADY,
Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN BRADY: Thank you for your letter regarding H.R. 6742, the "Secure Border Communications Act." I appreciate your support in bringing this legislation before the House of Representatives, and accordingly, understand that the Committee on Ways and Means will not take further action on this bill.

The Committee on Homeland Security concurs with the mutual understanding that by foregoing consideration on this bill at this time, the Committee on Ways and Means does not waive any jurisdiction over the subject matter contained in this bill or similar legislation in the future. In addition, should a conference on this bill be necessary, I would support a request by the Committee on Ways and Means for conferees on those provisions within your jurisdiction.

I will insert copies of this exchange in the Congressional Record during consideration of this bill on the House floor. I thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL T. MCCAUL,
Chairman.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6742, the Secure Border Communications Act.

Mr. Speaker, it is essential that the men and women of the Department of Homeland Security have reliable and effective communications equipment in the field.

Unfortunately, in recent years, U.S. Customs and Border Protection has been unable to achieve and maintain baseline communications capabilities, with devices exhibiting a range of issues from system incompatibility to outright inoperability. For Border Patrol agents in remote areas of the border, particularly along the U.S.-Canadian border, such issues give rise to troubling operational and officer safety challenges.

In response, H.R. 6742 directs the Secretary of Homeland Security to ensure that CBP agents and officers are equipped with secure radio technologies that are interoperable regardless of where used along the border.

Additionally, it authorizes the Secretary to evaluate new and emerging communications technologies to determine their suitability for use along the border.

On a related note, a recent positive development came this summer when CBP awarded \$26 million in contracts to upgrade their mission critical equipment.

While CBP is slowly upgrading their communication networks and equip-

ment, H.R. 6742 underscores Congress' interest in seeing meaningful progress. As such, I support H.R. 6742 and ask my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, it is our duty as Members of Congress to ensure that the men and women who patrol and protect our border are trained and equipped to do their jobs.

Unreliable communication in areas between ports of entry or remote areas due to system inoperability is an issue H.R. 6742 aims to fix. It seeks to do so by placing on the shoulders of the Secretary of Homeland Security the responsibility for ensuring that each agent or officer is equipped with secure, reliable radios.

Mr. Speaker, I support this approach. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 6742, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, this ensures that not only are communication devices operable but that they are interoperable between agents down on the border risking their lives day in and day out.

I can't thank them enough. I have been down to the border so many times, and I see the harsh conditions that they operate under. I just want to send a message of gratitude from the United States Congress and our Committee on Homeland Security, and thank them for the work that they do tirelessly. Honestly, I think we don't thank them enough for what they do.

The encryption issue is vitally important because the drug cartels are getting so sophisticated that they can pick up communications of our law enforcement. This bill will go a long way to help protect those communications and make sure that they can do their job in a more safe and efficient manner in protecting the American public.

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

Mr. MAST. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 6742, the Secure Border Communications Act. Every single day the brave law enforcement officers of the United States Customs and Border Protection put themselves in harm's way in order to secure our borders and ports of entry. This bill will strengthen inter-agency border security communication and communication within U.S. Customs and Border Protection by improving communication technologies for all CBP officers and agents.

When agents or officers are in the field, secure communications with other CBP personnel and law enforcement agencies is imperative to mission success and officer safety. Currently, communication devices and radios used by officers and agents are outdated and hinder interagency communication. I never want there to be a circumstance where a CBP officer or agent is operating in a remote area along our border and is not able to call for backup or whose location is intercepted by the cartels due to defective devices. We must not accept that as a possibility; we must ensure that our agents and officers are fully equipped with the proper technology.

H.R. 6742 will require the Department of Homeland Security to ensure that CBP per-

sonnel are equipped with secure radios or other two-way communication devices. These devices will allow officers and agents to communicate between ports of entry and inspection stations, and with other law enforcement entities operating in the same area of responsibility.

I want to thank my friend and colleague, Chairman MCCAUL, for his cosponsorship and leadership on this important bill. Mr. Speaker, we are in the midst of a war on terror and continue to be the target of radicals who want to do our country harm. Ensuring our law enforcement officers operating along the borders and at our ports of entry are fully equipped is essential to national security. Beyond the threat of terrorism, securing our border is vitally important to preventing drug and human trafficking. Improving communication is a critical component of this mission. Mr. Speaker, let's take some decisive action to secure our border. Let's pass this bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MCCAUL) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6742.

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.

SERGEANT JOHN TOOMBS RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATION TREATMENT FACILITY

Mr. DESJARLAIS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs be discharged from further consideration of the bill (H.R. 2634) to designate the Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Facility Expansion of the Department of Veterans Affairs Alvin C. York Medical Center in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, as the "Sergeant John Toombs Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Facility", and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ARRINGTON). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Tennessee?

There was no objection.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2634

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

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Sergeant John Toombs of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, served in the Tennessee Army National Guard as a part of the highly distinguished 230th Signal Corps.

(2) His six years in the National Guard included a deployment to Afghanistan, where Sergeant Toombs proudly served as a guard and escort for visiting dignitaries and reporters traveling into highly dangerous, war ravaged areas in Afghanistan.

(3) As a result of his service in Afghanistan, Sergeant Toombs developed symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a disability he continued to suffer from after leaving the National Guard in 2014.