

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Improving Rural Call Quality and Reliability Act.

This is a bill that I introduced in a bipartisan fashion with my colleagues here on both sides of the aisle in the 114th Congress, and we passed it in 2016. Here in the 115th Congress, we passed it again, but we didn't quite get it to the finish line. But here we are.

I want to thank my Democratic colleague from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) for joining me in introducing the legislation. It is much needed.

I want to thank Senator KLOBUCHAR and Senator THUNE for finally getting the Senate to act on this important legislation. This is the Senate bill. To me, it doesn't matter whose name or what number is on this bill. It is about good policy getting through to the finish line.

Telephone companies often rely on intermediate providers to connect calls from larger networks to local service providers. All too often, especially in rural areas, those calls are poor quality, looped, dropped, not even connected, or disconnected.

This failure hurts our families, small businesses, farms, and consumers in rural America who are in need of emergency assistance, public services, or are simply trying to do business.

Families and businesses in rural America should have the same communication access as those living in urban areas. Improving rural call completion rates and quality are important to ensuring the strength of small towns and granting Americans the choice to live and thrive in whatever community is best for them and their family—rural, urban, or wherever.

Our bill will help address this problem by requiring providers to register with the FCC, the Federal Communications Commission, in order to meet quality standards and ensure reliable phone service in rural areas. It also prohibits providers from using intermediary routing services not registered with the FCC.

After years of hard work in Congress and by stakeholders spread throughout Iowa, across the heartland, and across the country, I am happy to see this meaningful legislation finally moving again, and I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman WALDEN; Ranking Member PAL-LONE; and the subcommittee chair and ranking member, Mrs. BLACKBURN and Mr. DOYLE, for their help and leadership on this issue.

Mr. LANCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from South Dakota (Mrs. NOEM).

Mrs. NOEM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support the Improving Rural Call Quality and Reliability Act.

Most Americans can rely on their phone service to keep in touch with loved ones. They can respond to urgent work when away from their place of

business and respond to emergencies. But many of my constituents in South Dakota continue to have these critical calls dropped with absolutely no warning.

More specifically, companies in the business of routing voice calls sometimes purposely drop long-distance calls headed for remote areas as a way to save money.

While this is inexcusable just for the sheer inconvenience, some of these calls involve emergencies, leaving families in unnecessarily dangerous situations.

The provisions within this bill are simple. We simply direct the FCC to establish basic quality standards for providers that transmit voice calls. This will help ensure businesses, families, and emergency responders can count on phone calls being completed.

Mr. Speaker, I love living in a small town in America. It is where I grew up, and it is where I have chosen to raise my family.

Dependable phone service shouldn't be a question for those who make the choice to live in wide-open spaces, especially when we are making new, amazing technological advances on a daily basis.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to pass this legislation and ensure that those in South Dakota and rural areas across the country can rely on their phone calls going through.

Mr. MICHAEL F. DOYLE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, this is a good piece of legislation, and I hope all Members will vote for it when it comes to the floor.

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

□ 1230

Mr. LANCE. Mr. Speaker, the House should pass this legislation unanimously. We are one country: urban, suburban, and rural, and this will help rural America.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURGESS). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. LANCE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 96.

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. LANCE. 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.

KARI'S LAW ACT OF 2017

Mr. LANCE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and concur in the

Senate amendment to the bill (H.R. 582) to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to require multi-line telephone systems to have a configuration that permits users to directly initiate a call to 9-1-1 without dialing any additional digit, code, prefix, or post-fix, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the Senate amendment is as follows:

Senate amendment:

Beginning on page 4, strike line 10 and all that follows through page 5, line 2, and insert the following:

(b) *EFFECTIVE DATE.*—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to a multi-line telephone system that is manufactured, imported, offered for first sale or lease, first sold or leased, or installed after the date that is 2 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. YOUNG of Iowa). Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. LANCE) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MICHAEL F. DOYLE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LANCE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous material in the RECORD on the bill.

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

There was no objection.

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

H.R. 582, or Kari's Law, was sponsored by my good friend, Congressman GOHMERT. This important bill passed earlier this Congress on January 23, 2017. I am pleased that at this time it will be sent to the President to be signed into law.

The residents of Texas know of a very painful story. Kari Hunt was murdered in a hotel room by her estranged husband in 2013. Kari's 9-year-old daughter did the exact right thing she knew to do, which was to call 911. Unfortunately, she did not know to dial another digit to get an outside line; and, parenthetically, I would not have known that.

This legislation will ensure that when you stay at a hotel, you can dial 911 and the call will go through without dialing another number. Kari's dad, Hank, and Mr. GOHMERT had been relentless advocates to make sure that this legislation becomes law. I commend their efforts and that of Senator KLOBUCHAR and her staff, along with Senator DEB FISCHER.

God bless Kari's family for not giving up and fighting for this law. It is impossible to express how important it is, especially as we approach the 50th anniversary of 911 service next week.

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

Mr. MICHAEL F. DOYLE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Senate amendment to H.R. 582, a bill that passed the House last Congress by voice vote.

I agree that we must do all we can to make sure that consumers using multiline telephone systems can directly dial 911 without having to dial additional digits first. These are the large enterprise phone systems that we use in big office buildings and hotels. Many of these phones require consumers to dial an extra 9 to get an outside line. Most of us know that, but too many people do not realize that you also have to dial 9 before dialing 911 on these phones, and if you don't dial the 9 first, you can't reach emergency services.

As you can imagine, in desperate situations, being able to quickly reach first responders can mean the difference between life and death.

This very issue led to a tragedy in Texas several years ago. Kari Dunn was killed while her 9-year-old daughter tried to call for help. Kari's daughter did what she thought she was supposed to do in an emergency, dial 911. But because the system she was using required her to dial that additional 9 first, she only heard silence on the other end.

Building on the Herculean effort of Kari Dunn's family, we are one step closer to fixing this problem once and for all.

H.R. 582 is an important step toward making our systems work better in an emergency. But for all the good this bill does, it still leaves work to be done. Specifically, these multiline systems still often fail to deliver accurate location information to first responders. That means that if someone calls 911 from this very building that we are sitting in, for instance, precious minutes could tick by as emergency personnel struggle to figure out where the call came from in this enormous complex.

That delay could be the difference between life and death. We must act to correct this problem, too, because making sure the call goes through is only helpful if public safety officials can find the caller.

Democrats tried to include such a provision in the version of this bill from last Congress, and at that time we received a commitment from Chairman WALDEN to work together on a separate bill to address this concern. We were not able to solve this problem last Congress, and we expect the commitment will carry over to this Congress.

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

Mr. LANCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN).

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, again, I thank the vice chairman and the ranking member for their persistence on this measure. I also commend Mr. GOHMERT, who has worked with Kari's dad and has seen this through.

We are pleased to get this on its way to the President's desk. Indeed, we are going to continue to work on the enhanced 911 requirements because we do think that that is important. Technology allows more precise indications of exactly, precisely where phone calls are coming from. But solving this problem is one we need to do today.

All of us who are moms and dads and have children and grandchildren, you train them to dial 911. I am certain that that is what Kari did with her daughter: If there is ever an emergency, dial 911.

And the fact is that this required the preceding digit, an extra number, to be dialed in order to access that outside line that would have delivered that 911 call.

So as we look at 50 years of 911 service and Kari's 36th birthday, which is coming up tomorrow, it is so appropriate that we take this action. So I thank Mr. GOHMERT and the members of the committee who have continued the diligence on this.

Mr. MICHAEL F. DOYLE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, at this time, it gives me great pleasure to yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from the California (Ms. ESHOO), a valuable member of our Energy and Commerce Committee.

Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Speaker, I thank our terrific ranking member for yielding time to me and for his leadership and that of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle.

Kari's Law addresses a very serious problem and it has been outlined by Members on both sides of the aisle, and I support the bill.

But it is very important for those who are listening into this discussion this morning that when anyone dials 911 from a hotel, from a large building of several stories, from office buildings, from our office buildings where our offices are—10 floors, 20 floors, 30 floors—seconds really matter and they can make the difference between life or death. You should not have to dial 9 or some other prefix to get help.

We already know that that is what happened in this tragic situation where the 9-year-old daughter was witnessing the actual murder taking place by her father, the estranged husband of Kari. That woman lost her life.

So what is missing in this legislation is accuracy for multiline telephone systems. Once your call reaches the 911 call center, whomever answers that call needs to know exactly where you are to dispatch first responders. Now, if you are in a single-family home, it is easy. But if you are in any one of these buildings, hotels, or office buildings, the first responders have to go floor by floor. That takes a long time. We know because we walk from floor to floor just to get over to the Capitol. It takes us 7 or 8 minutes to get from Cannon House Office Building to the Capitol.

So if you call 911 again from the 10th floor of a 30-story office building, it takes first responders a long time to get there.

Oftentimes, during an emergency, individuals who have called in, they don't really know exactly where they are, or they are so panicked that they are blinded by what is going on that they can't express that to the dispatcher. That is why location technology is really important.

I offered an amendment when this bill was taken up at the Energy and Commerce Committee to include location technology. That was rejected by the majority, but they promised that they would work with me in order to bring that about.

Despite a lot of reaching out, et cetera, it didn't happen. I am once again offering legislation to establish that there will be location technology applied to multiline telephone systems. I think it is essential, and I don't know anyone who would disagree with that. It just didn't happen. It is not in this bill. But I think that it is important to highlight, as we celebrate the work that has been done, the important step that this takes, that there is a hole in it.

So as has been said by other Members, we are approaching the 50th anniversary next week of the first 911 call ever made in our country. I would like to urge my colleagues to work with me to build on the important progress that this bill represents, Kari's Law, to ensure that all multiline telephone systems provide a caller's location when they dial 911 so that the full breadth and depth of an emergency system actually reaches them.

Mr. Speaker, I thank our ranking member for yielding time to me.

Mr. LANCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT), the principal sponsor.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I certainly thank my new friend, Mr. LEONARD LANCE, from New Jersey for his great help in marshaling this bill, and I appreciate the bipartisan support. I understand there is another element regarding location and there is some disagreement. I see the merit. I understand some have concerns.

But what we found out, just to go back, people have talked about how Kari Hunt was viscerously attacked by her estranged husband, and her little 9-year-old daughter calling 911. The way that was learned was—and by the way, she was not only stabbed 21 times, she was repeatedly struck. This is an attack that went on over several minutes.

Her brutal, mean-spirited estranged husband now says from prison: Well, I don't think it would have mattered if a 911 call had went through.

He was attacking her for several minutes. The police could get there in Marshall in a couple of minutes. It would have made all the difference.

□ 1245

But the way it was learned was that Hank had his little 9-year-old granddaughter in his lap after Kari was pronounced dead and was trying to console

her. She was weeping and said to her grandfather:

I don't know what happened. I kept dialing 911 and nothing ever happened. I would hang up, and I would dial 911, and nothing happened.

That is when Hank began to look into it and found out the situation. Then, after he brought it to my attention, we got to looking into it. The hotel associations and the other groups have been very helpful.

It turns out that it is not an expense. All it takes is the government directing to make sure these phones are programmed so that when you dial 911, it goes straight out. It won't cost anything. The programmers themselves have said: Hey, if you have a problem, let us know. We will come out and fix that for free.

So all it takes is this government saying: Just do it, so when a child or adult or anyone dials 911 it goes out.

I thank my friend, MARSHA BLACKBURN; I thank Senator KLOBUCHAR for her work; and my staff, Caralee Conklin and Andrew Keyes, particularly, for working on this.

Tomorrow, Kari would have turned 36. I believe that this will prevent any other Kari in the future from having their birthday celebrated after they are deceased. This will be a legacy for Kari and for Hank, who are the family, and for her daughter.

I thank everyone involved in making this happen, and I thank my Democrat friend for working with us.

Mr. LANCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS).

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, we all teach our kids. We teach them how to stay safe and how to respond in an emergency. They learn things like stop, drop, and roll for fires; don't talk to strangers; look both ways before you cross the street; and dial 911 in emergencies.

Unfortunately, there is no lesson explaining that on some phones you must dial 9 to get an outside line before you dial 911. Other phones even have additional numbers, and they are not the same for every phone system.

Multiline phone systems like those found in offices—our offices, hotels, and hospitals—make our lives easier by condensing multiple lines into a single phone. One feature of multiline phone systems is that, in order to get outside of the internal lines, you must dial a specific code or set of digits. It doesn't seem like a big deal or even necessarily life threatening, but to this young girl trying to save her mother, that is exactly what a multiline phone system in Marshall, Texas, became.

We have heard the story. In 2013, Kari Dunn was stabbed by her estranged husband while her daughter attempted to dial 911 multiple times. She knew the number to call to save her mother's life, but she didn't know to dial 9 to get an outside line. She didn't realize what a multiphone system represented. The

emergency personnel subsequently were not getting notified in time.

The Energy and Commerce Committee marked up this bill in a previous Congress and supported its passage into law. I was grateful to support the bill back then. I am grateful to Mr. GOHMERT for continuing to press this issue. I look forward to voting for this again.

This tragedy occurred in Texas, but it could have happened anywhere. In emergencies, every minute counts. We must remove obstacles to emergency response, and this bill does just that.

Mr. LANCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS).

(Mr. SHIMKUS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, it is a great day. I came down here, also, with Congresswoman ESHOO. We chair the bipartisan NextGen 9-1-1 Caucus. Fifty years is a great anniversary. The caucus has been around 50 years. It is one of those true bipartisan developments. When ANNA and I started, it was Conrad Burns in the Senate and Hillary Clinton on the Senate side.

When addressing 911 services and the problems that roll out when we have a successful program, there is nothing perfect. We have to come back and revisit. But it is like baseball, apple pie, and Chevrolet. What could be wrong with being focused on getting emergency services to people in need? That is why 911 is such a great service.

I want to thank my colleague from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) for bringing this up.

We always have to keep changing and updating. As technology moves from the dial-up phone to the iPhone and we start doing text and we start doing video, the NextGen 9-1-1 Caucus works with industry, the telecommunications sector, and the Peace apps to make sure that our first-line responders have the best opportunity to find, as Anna said, what floor. That is a big issue.

Technology will overcome that some day, and we have to achieve what we can achieve now, but never shy away from the fact that we can always refine and get better. This is a good start.

I want to thank my colleague from Texas. I appreciate his work. I do appreciate my friends on the Democratic side for their commitment and support on this over the years, not just today.

Mr. MICHAEL F. DOYLE of Pennsylvania. I will close for our side now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to first congratulate Representative GOHMERT and Senator KLOBUCHAR for this piece of legislation.

I hope that our friends on the Republican side will work with us to improve the location accuracy for these multiline systems. I think that is an important piece of unfinished business that we need to do to make this bill even better. We support the bill.

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

Mr. LANCE. Mr. Speaker, this is the way Congress should work in a bicameral and a bipartisan capacity. I think those of us who serve on the Energy and Commerce Committee are very proud of our service there. It is the committee in the House of Representatives that sends the most bills to the floor—the most bills that pass, the most bills that pass in the Senate, and the most bills that reach the desk of the President of the United States. This was true of President Obama, as I am sure it will be true of President Trump.

This act will improve the lives of the American people. We mourn the loss of the terrible tragedy in Texas, but out of that terrible tragedy we hope to improve the American Nation, and this certainly will do that.

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 New Jersey (Mr. LANCE) that the House suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendment to the bill, H.R. 582.

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. LANCE. 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.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 53 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1615

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WOMACK) at 4 o'clock and 15 minutes p.m.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, February 8, 2018.

Hon. PAUL D. RYAN,
The Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of