

have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 347.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, last September the House approved an identical bill, H.R. 2278, in the 115th Congress by a voice vote. Unfortunately, that bill did not move in the Senate, so we are back to reconsider H.R. 347, introduced by Mr. TIPTON and cosponsored by my Energy and Commerce colleague, Ms. DEGETTE.

The Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act established a process for remediating inactive uranium-ore processing sites, such as the one in Grand Junction, Colorado.

To protect public health and safety from potential risks, uranium mill tailings must be disposed at a site that is licensed and that meets standards established by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency.

The continued operation of the Cheney Disposal Cell is critical. Last year, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment provided the following for the RECORD: "Given that this is the only DOE uranium mill tailings disposal site left in the country, it is critical that this facility remains open to receive and dispose of the uranium mill tailings that are discovered in our communities. This action will ensure the continued protection of human health and the environment."

The cell receives approximately 2,700 cubic yards of additional waste per year, and has sufficient space to receive an estimated 235,000 cubic yards, which represents 86 more years of operation at current rates.

H.R. 347 would authorize the Department of Energy to continue to operate the Cheney Disposal Cell through September 2048 or until it is filled to capacity. Currently, DOE is authorized to operate this cell through September 2023.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good, bipartisan bill, and I hope we can move it forward today.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) will control the time for the minority.

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, first, with apologies to our official reporter, and directed at you, "let the good times roll," "laissez les bons temps rouler."

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 347, the Responsible Disposal Reauthorization Act of 2019, was introduced by our Colorado colleague, SCOTT TIPTON, and cosponsored by my Energy and Commerce

Committee colleague from Colorado, DIANA DEGETTE.

H.R. 347 extends the authorization of the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act of 1978 site in Mesa County, Colorado. The legislation was passed by the House last September, and the bill today is identical to what we passed last year, save a change in dates.

The legislation was considered by the Subcommittee on Environment and marked up through regular order. It was reported by the full committee with a bipartisan amendment by a voice vote.

Mining and processing of uranium generates a byproduct known as uranium mill tailings. Congress passed the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act 4 years ago to establish the framework for DOE to dispose of mill tailings, which are left over from nuclear defense activities and the development of our commercial nuclear industry.

The act also authorized the Grand Junction, Colorado, site to serve as a disposal location. This is the only DOE uranium mill tailings disposal site remaining open in the Nation, so it is necessary for the final disposition of mill tailings discovered in communities.

H.R. 347 extends the site's current authorization until 2031. The extension will enable the site to plan long-term operations to protect public health and the environment.

Mr. Speaker, I urge passage of this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers on my side, and I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TIPTON), the author of the legislation.

Mr. TIPTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Illinois for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Energy's Cheney Disposal Cell in Mesa County, Colorado, is a critical component of the DOE legacy management mission to protect public health and the environment.

The cell receives radioactive waste materials that were produced decades ago during the uranium milling process. The waste materials continue to be uncovered during road construction, bridge replacement, home foundation excavation, and other construction activities in several towns in western Colorado. Once the waste materials are discovered, they must be properly disposed of at the Cheney Disposal Cell.

The authorization for the Cheney Disposal Cell expires at the end of 2023, or when the site is filled to capacity. Currently, the remaining capacity in the cell is approximately 234,000 cubic yards, therefore, an extended authorization is required. H.R. 347 would extend the authorization until 2031.

As my colleague from Illinois noted, we passed this legislation in the last

Congress, but this bill is now coming up at a critically important time. According to the Department of Energy, if the disposal cell is not reauthorized this year, DOE will have to take steps to begin to decommission the site. This means no more materials will be accepted in 2019 and we will lose a critical component of the DOE's legacy management program.

I thank my colleague from Colorado, Ms. DIANA DEGETTE, for her support on this bill, and for her leadership on the Energy and Commerce Committee for recognizing the need to bring this bill up now.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 347.

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers, and I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I urge passage of the bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, I, too, for the reasons that this legislation would allow for the only disposal site of its kind in the country, it is important that we pass this important infrastructure concept, and I encourage our colleagues to support the bill.

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 York (Mr. TONKO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 347.

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.

REAUTHORIZING WEST VALLEY DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1138) to reauthorize the West Valley demonstration project, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1138

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

SECTION 1. WEST VALLEY DEMONSTRATION PROJECT.

(a) REAUTHORIZATION.—Section 3(a) of the West Valley Demonstration Project Act (Public Law 96-368; 42 U.S.C. 2021a note) is amended by striking "\$5,000,000 for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1981" and inserting "\$75,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2020 through 2026".

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General shall submit to Congress a report that describes—

(1) the volumes, origins, and types of radioactive waste at the Western New York Service Center in West Valley, New York;

(2) what options have been identified for disposal of each such type of radioactive waste;

(3) what is known about the costs of, and timeframes for, each such option;

(4) the benefits and challenges of each such option, according to the State of New York and the Department of Energy; and

(5) as of the date of enactment of this Act—

(A) how much has been spent on the disposal of radioactive waste associated with the demonstration project prescribed by section 2(a) of the West Valley Demonstration Project Act; and

(B) what volumes and types of radioactive waste have been disposed of from the Western New York Service Center.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. TONKO) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TONKO. 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. 1138.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, last September, the House approved an identical bill, H.R. 2389, in the 115th Congress, by a voice vote.

Unfortunately, that bill did not move in the Senate. Today, we will reconsider H.R. 1138, which has been reintroduced by my New York colleague and friend, Mr. REED.

The Western New York Nuclear Service Center in West Valley, New York, has been the center of disputes and legislative actions since the 1980s. This site is a difficult reminder that we are still dealing with the consequences of our Nation's entry into the atomic age.

While the site is owned by New York State, between 1966 and 1972 it was operated by a private business to reprocess spent nuclear fuel primarily provided by the Federal Government. Those reprocessing activities ended decades ago, but high-level waste and transuranic waste continue to be stored at the site.

A cost-sharing agreement for the site's remediation has been resolved, but disposal of the waste remains a point of contention.

Since 1986, DOE has classified the waste as commercial rather than waste deriving from atomic energy defense activities.

Under this classification, DOE believes that the cost for disposal of the wastes should be borne by the State of New York. New York State believes that since 60 percent of the material sent to West Valley was from facilities that conducted defense activities, and 80 percent of the reprocessed plutonium shipped out of West Valley was sent to defense facilities, it should be categorized as defense-related waste.

This classification disagreement has major consequences for how the waste can be disposed of and who will be re-

sponsible for covering the costs. While I would prefer more certainty in clarifying the wastes' classification, this legislation puts us on a path towards solving this issue by requiring a GAO report on the origins of and disposal pathways, including cost estimates.

In addition, the bill reauthorizes the West Valley Demonstration Project at \$75 million annually for 7 years. This funding level is in line with historic appropriations levels and will ensure the cleanup will continue on schedule.

This bill may not resolve the decades-old dispute between New York and the Department of Energy. It does address funding for the remediation of the site and attempts to move the ball forward to ensure that wastes are disposed of properly and, most importantly, fairly.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1138, a bill to reauthorize the West Valley Demonstration Project, was introduced recently by our New York colleague, TOM REED. I also see my good friend, BRIAN HIGGINS on the floor, and I know the chairman has been personally involved with this for many, many, many years.

The House passed an essentially identical version of this bill this past September on suspension. Prior to that vote, the bipartisan legislation had moved through the Energy and Commerce Committee by regular order, including a legislative hearing and mark-ups as part of our broader nuclear waste management agenda. It was reported by the full committee with a bipartisan amendment by a voice vote.

H.R. 1138 authorizes appropriations to support the Department of Energy's environmental remediation at its West Valley cleanup site in New York through 2026. It also directs a study to help Congress determine the final disposition of radioactive waste that DOE is cleaning up at the site.

H.R. 1138 continues the work of Congress to address the Federal Government's obligations for treatment and disposal of the legacy waste produced during the Cold War, and through the Federal Government's early efforts to develop a civilian nuclear energy industry.

The Department of Energy has successfully remediated 92 sites of this waste, but the most technologically challenging projects remain in process at 17 locations, one of which is the West Valley site.

In 1980, Congress passed the West Valley Demonstration Project Act to direct DOE to address legacy environmental issues and authorized appropriations only through fiscal year 1981. The project has not been reauthorized since that time, despite Congress funding DOE's work at the site for the past 37 years.

H.R. 1138 corrects this situation, provides a path to answering important questions concerning the waste disposi-

tion, and ensures spending at the site is subject to an active authorization.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 1138, and I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1630

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New York (Mr. HIGGINS), my colleague and friend from the 26th Congressional District.

Mr. HIGGINS of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of Congressman TOM REED's bill, H.R. 1138, which authorizes funding for the cleanup of the West Valley demonstration project, the nuclear waste remediation site in western New York.

Mr. Speaker, advocates are in Washington this week to remind Congress of the importance of the Great Lakes as a source of clean water for millions of Americans. The long-term cleanup at West Valley, which sits 30 miles from Lake Erie and at the foot of a tributary stream, will prevent harmful contamination to the region.

The Department of Energy has an obligation to ensure that 600,000 gallons of high-level radioactive waste are solidified and disposed of safely and expeditiously. The funding in this bill will allow us to do just that.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New York (Mr. REED), the author of the legislation.

Mr. REED. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) for yielding me the time and his leadership on this issue, as well as my good friends PAUL TONKO and BRIAN HIGGINS for joining me in the effort today in regards to the West Valley Reauthorization Act before us.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this legislation. This legislation deals with the project located in our district in western New York and the great community of West Valley.

West Valley, New York, is the home of radioactive waste that has been distributed there and deposited there over the years way back when. But I will tell you, over the last 15 years, this site has led the Nation, in my humble opinion, in coming up with techniques and technologies that are deployed across other nuclear waste facilities and sites in order to handle that high-level radioactive waste from those facilities as well as those in West Valley.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is only right to bring further clarity and certainty to our area of the district at West Valley in regards to this bill, giving 7 years' worth of reauthorization legislation, to send the signal that not only do we stand and support the appropriations that go to this facility in order to clean it up in the most efficient and effective manner, but, also, we stand as authorizers to say that this type of facility and this type of program needs

to be renewed for at least 7 years because, Mr. Speaker, it is going to take many more years to clean this site up.

Giving this site 7 years of that additional certainty is the only right thing to do in order to have these folks who are doing the hard work be given the indications from Congress that we stand with them as they engage in this effort.

As I close, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the entire Energy and Commerce Committee and Mr. SHIMKUS for his tireless work on the issue of nuclear waste cleanup and standing with us on this piece of legislation.

In particular, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the local officials: the town of Ashford supervisor, Charles Davis; the West Valley deputy general manager, Scott Anderson; and the other local leaders who have stood in a community effort in order to bring this West Valley demonstration site to a complete closure, hopefully, in the near future with the legislation that we have before us.

So I ask my colleagues to join in support of this legislation, and I truly appreciate their efforts to join us today.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 1138, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, West Valley, as an issue, has been there for a long time. It is good to know that we are moving the ball forward.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. TONKO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1138.

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.

BURN PIT REGISTRY ENHANCEMENT ACT

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous material on H.R. 1381.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1381) to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to take actions necessary to ensure that certain individuals may update the burn pit registry with a registered individual's cause of death, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1381

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 “Burn Pit Registry Enhancement Act”.

SEC. 2. BURN PIT REGISTRY UPDATES.

(a) INDIVIDUALS ELIGIBLE TO UPDATE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall take actions necessary to ensure that the burn pit registry may be updated with the cause of death of a deceased registered individual by—

(A) an individual designated by such deceased registered individual; or

(B) if no such individual is designated, an immediate family member of such deceased registered individual.

(2) DESIGNATION.—The Secretary shall provide, with respect to the burn pit registry, a process by which a registered individual may make a designation for purposes of paragraph (1)(A).

(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) The term “burn pit registry” means the registry established under section 201 of the Dignified Burial and Other Veterans’ Benefits Improvement Act of 2012 (Public Law 112–260; 38 U.S.C. 527 note).

(2) The term “immediate family member”, with respect to a deceased individual, means—

(A) the spouse, parent, brother, sister, or adult child of the individual;

(B) an adult person to whom the individual stands in loco parentis; or

(C) any other adult person—

(i) living in the household of the individual at the time of the death of the individual; and

(ii) related to the individual by blood or marriage.

(3) The term “registered individual” means an individual registered with the burn pit registry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) and the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DAVID P. ROE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I, too, in celebration of today say “laissez les bons temps rouler.”

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1381.

During Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom and in other parts of the world where American servicemembers were deployed, the Department of Defense exposed brave Americans to toxic fumes and dangerous chemicals by burning waste in open-air burn pits. Some of the waste burned in these open-air pits were human waste, Styrofoam, lithium batteries, tires, medical waste, and other toxic substances. Servicemembers had no way to avoid inhaling the smoke from these burn pits that were located on their bases, sometimes right next to their barracks.

When this committee held a hearing last year on burn pits, we heard from Leroy Torres, the founder of Burn Pits

360, who breathed in burn pit smoke while stationed in Balad Air Base in Iraq in 2007. When he returned home in 2008, he needed immediate hospitalization for lung disease.

Mr. Torres and other veterans suffering from medical conditions believed to be caused by exposure to burn pits are still fighting to receive healthcare and benefits because illnesses potentially caused by burn pit exposure still aren’t recognized by the VA.

Research to understand the harmful effects these toxic substances may have had on military servicemembers is now underway. However, the totality of harmful health effects this dangerous practice may have had on servicemembers is yet to be fully known and understood, and it may take years for clinicians and scientists to understand the health effects or discover effective treatments for those who were exposed.

In an effort to better track the health effects these exposures had on deployed troops, Congress required the VA to create the open burn pit registry in 2012 to compile self-reported data on veterans who believed they were exposed to open-air burn pits while serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This registry allows VA to easily communicate with this population of veterans, as well as track trends within the population that may indicate a need for further research into certain health concerns. However, the registry failed to provide, in it, the ability to report cause of death for veterans who are registered and then subsequently pass away.

Congressman RUIZ’s bill, the Burn Pit Registry Enhancement Act, would allow an individual designated by the veteran during the registry process or an immediate family member to update the veteran’s file on the registry with a cause of death.

These additional data will allow researchers and the VA to identify trends, similarities, and correlations in this population that will better inform our research efforts on the impact these open-air burn pits have on the servicemembers who served in combat zones.

With the addition of more data to the burn pits registry, we hope this will help VA conduct groundbreaking research that will lead to prevention and treatments for toxic exposures, including exposure to toxic substances inescapably connected to military service.

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

Mr. DAVID P. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1381, the Burn Pit Registry Enhancement Act.

This bill is sponsored by Dr. RAUL RUIZ of California and Dr. BRAD WENSTRUP of Ohio. Dr. RUIZ and Dr. WENSTRUP are medical professionals, former members of the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, and co-chairs of the