

small subcontractors are to the Federal procurement process, it is critical we ensure that they have an adequate system of redress should they have legitimate issues with the prime contractors. Once again, we are looking out for the little guy, which is what this committee does, and I think we all really appreciate that.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce this piece of legislation which protects our small contractors by updating the subcontracting goaling regime through increased flexibility and accountability.

Establishing incentives to count lower-tier subcontracting awards and a dispute process for subcontractors to utilize in the event of nonpayment ensures a healthy Federal procurement marketplace. Today's legislation spreads the economic power of Federal procurement to more companies and the communities where they are located.

I want to thank the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. KELLY) for cosponsoring this critical legislation and for all his work on this issue while serving on the Small Business Committee, and I would like to also take this opportunity to thank the ranking member.

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

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 227, which amends the Small Business Act to specify what credit is given for certain subcontractors and to provide a dispute process for non-payment to subcontractors.

Mr. Speaker, it is of the utmost importance that we pass this legislation to ensure subcontractors receive the credit and payment for performance that they have earned.

Between 2010 and 2016, Texas' population grew at the second-greatest rate in the country, accompanied by increased demand for residential, retail and commercial space.

With this increased demand came an increase in small businesses and the need for subcontractors across the state.

This fact alone explains why H.R. 227 is so important not only to small businesses throughout the country but specifically the small businesses and subcontractors in Texas that deserve compensation for their performance in a timely manner.

The Houston Chapter of the American Subcontractors Association (ASA-HC) is a collective voice for a diverse membership that was created in order to ensure quality, safety and ethics in construction trades.

ASA-HC advocates for legislative reform and provides educational opportunities for the subcontracting community.

Since ASA-HC's founding in 1966, more than 2,500 member companies throughout the United States, and more than 160 members in Houston benefit from the advocacy ASA offers to its members.

These hard-working Americans deserve nothing less than our maximal support for this bill.

Not only do these Americans deserve our support for H.R. 227, they deserve our maximum efforts to end the government shutdown.

Thousands of subcontractors whose pay comes from federal contracts have little hope of recouping the pay they lost when the government is not operating.

Julie Burr, a single mom from Kansas City, struggles to support her family during this shutdown.

She has been out of work and cannot receive pay for the two weeks prior to the shutdown because there is no one to process her time sheet.

She has taken extra shifts in her side job as a seasonal employee at Barnes and Noble, but it only makes up 25 percent of what her normal pay would be and she has had to ask for an extension on her rent payment, which was due on the first of the month.

Ethan James, a 21 year old minimum-wage contractor can only realistically miss three to four days of work before his standard of living is compromised.

He now risks missing his rent payment because he is not receiving the checks he depends on to sustain himself.

These hardworking Americans deserve more, we cannot afford to drag our feet on such an important issue.

I urge my colleagues to join me in voting for H.R. 227 and standing true to our nation's commitment to supporting and protecting small businesses and subcontractors.

I include in the RECORD a new article entitled "During Shutdown, Janitors, Security Guards and other Federal Contractors receive no back pay."

[From ABC News, January 2, 2019]

DURING SHUTDOWN, JANITORS, SECURITY GUARDS, AND OTHER FEDERAL CONTRACTORS RECEIVE NO BACK PAY

(By Stephanie Ebbs and Anne Flaherty)

While hundreds of thousands of federal workers will have to wait for back pay after the government shutdown ends, thousands more whose pay comes from federal contracts have little hope of recouping the pay they lose when the government isn't operating. Some contractors are turning to other means to make up for the lost income, like taking extra shifts at a second job.

Julie Burr, an administrative assistant for the Department of Transportation in Kansas City, said she doesn't expect any compensation for the time she's been out of work during the shutdown and that she can't even get paid for the two weeks before it started because there's no one to process her time sheet.

"I'm just trying to take one day at a time honestly," Burr said in a phone interview. "I keep turning on the news and think maybe today's the day something will happen."

She said she's taken extra shifts in her side job as a seasonal employee at Barnes and Noble but it only makes up 25 percent of what her normal pay would be and she's had to ask for an extension on her rent payment, which was due on the first of the month.

Burr even set up a GoFundMe page to try and help with some of the expenses and is concerned that even if she can set up a payment plan it could hurt her credit score.

"I'm a single mom . . . we aren't a two income family or anything. It's just me, and I'm kind of trying to make things meet and if it comes to the point of selling items in the house I'll do that," she said.

During previous government shutdowns, Congress has passed resolutions approving back pay for most federal workers. But con-

tract workers like custodians and security officers, whose hourly wages are funded by private companies, don't get paid unless they work.

According to 32BJ SEIU, that means sudden unemployment with no end in sight for the 370 Smithsonian security officers in Washington D.C. protecting the popular museums—which house everything from Judy Garland's ruby red slippers from "The Wizard of Oz" to Charles Lindbergh's Spirit of St. Louis airplane—as well as the 50 security officers who work for Smithsonian museums in New York.

32BJ SEIU is a large property service workers' union that estimates some 2,000 of its members are facing potential paycheck disruptions as a result of the shutdown, including some 70 custodians at the Agriculture Department alone.

Most of those workers aren't eligible for back pay because they are paid by private companies with government contracts instead of being government employees.

It's a particularly ironic twist for federal workers caught in the showdown between President Donald Trump and congressional Democrats over funding for a border wall.

The union said that almost of all of its members are African-American or Latino and many don't support Trump's efforts to build a border wall.

"A true focus on America would mean support for the hardworking men and women who keep our government safe, clean and running every day while supporting their own families and communities across the country," said Jaime Contreras, a 32BJ SEIU vice president, in a statement.

"I wish everybody would just sit down and come to a compromise," she said.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELAZQUEZ) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 227.

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.

SMALL BUSINESS ADVOCACY IMPROVEMENTS ACT OF 2019

Ms. VELAZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 128) to clarify the primary functions and duties of the Office of Advocacy of the Small Business Administration, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 128

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 "Small Business Advocacy Improvements Act of 2019".

SEC. 2. AMENDMENT TO PRIMARY FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES OF THE OFFICE OF ADVOCACY OF THE SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION.

(a) PRIMARY FUNCTIONS.—Section 202 of Public Law 94-305 (15 U.S.C. 634b) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by inserting "and the international economy" after "economy";

(2) in paragraph (9), by striking "complete" and inserting "compete"; and

(3) in paragraph (12), by striking "service-disabled" and inserting "service-disabled".

(b) DUTIES.—Section 203(a) of Public Law 94-305 (15 U.S.C. 634c) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (5), by striking “and” at the end;

(2) in paragraph (6), by striking the period at the end and inserting “; and”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(7) represent the views and interests of small businesses before foreign governments and international entities for the purpose of contributing to regulatory and trade initiatives which may affect small businesses.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. 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 the measure under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 128, the Small Business Advocacy Improvements Act.

There are nearly 30 million small businesses in the United States representing more than 99 percent of all businesses. These small firms employ nearly 50 percent of all private-sector employees in the U.S. The SBA Office of Advocacy represents an important tool for these businesses because it is their voice that the office embodies in all matters of government.

Clarifying the authority of Advocacy to examine international economic data and represent small business interests in international discussions, particularly in trade negotiations, raises the ability of small American firms to participate in a global market. The office has already been participating in various international working groups on regulatory cooperation and trade initiatives with the sole focus of protecting and raising the interests of small businesses.

Their unique knowledge is necessary in trade negotiations to prevent indirect consequences from harming small firms and providing a more equitable playing field within international trade. That is why I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 128, the Small Business Advocacy Improvements Act of 2019.

I would like to once again thank Chairwoman VELAZQUEZ for working in a cooperative and bipartisan manner to bring this measure to the House floor. I would also like to thank our colleague from Kentucky (Mr. COMER) for

his leadership in sponsoring this legislation. He will be speaking here shortly.

This bipartisan bill, which passed the House back in the 115th Congress, the last Congress, simply clarifies the role of the Office of Advocacy of the United States Small Business Administration, which is charged with representing small businesses before Federal agencies whose policies and activities may affect them. The office also examines the role of small businesses in the American economy and the contributions they make in improving competition.

Advocacy is vital to ensuring that small firms are heard when the Federal Government makes policy decisions that will impact them. The current law is silent regarding Advocacy’s ability to study the role of small businesses in international economies, which is an important avenue for many small companies as they seek opportunities to expand overseas. This legislation would clarify that Advocacy should include international economies as part of its research functions, which will help us to better understand how international economies impact our Nation’s small businesses.

The current law is also silent regarding Advocacy’s authority to represent small businesses before foreign governments and international entities. This bill clarifies that Advocacy may represent small business views and interests before foreign governments and other international entities by contributing to regulatory and trade initiatives. Considering Advocacy’s experience with regulatory and trade initiatives, it makes sense to ensure that the needs of America’s small businesses are fairly represented in the international space as well.

Again, I want to thank the sponsor of this legislation, the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. COMER), and Chairwoman VELAZQUEZ for working on this important legislation and producing a simple solution to clarify the role of this office, and I urge my colleagues to support this straightforward legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. COMER).

Mr. COMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 128, the Small Business Advocacy Improvements Act of 2019.

I am proud, once again, to be the sponsor of this legislation which passed the House in a bipartisan manner during the 115th Congress. I want to thank my colleague, Chairwoman VELAZQUEZ, for working with me on this bill.

The Office of Advocacy at the United States Small Business Administration plays a vital role in ensuring that Federal agencies adequately consider how their policies impact America’s small businesses. While the Office of Advocacy has done excellent work on behalf of our Nation’s small businesses, the current law is silent on whether it can

research and advocate on behalf of small business on international matters such as trade initiatives and regulations. This is a problem that we can easily address.

For many small businesses, exporting and operating overseas is an important part of their success and allows them to grow. Given the Office of Advocacy’s knowledge and research on how domestic regulations impact small businesses, it is appropriate for the office to advocate and research small business interests on international matters as well, especially since international opportunities play a vital role for many of our Nation’s small businesses.

This bill advances the Office of Advocacy’s mission to advocate for America’s small businesses and clarifies its authority on international small business issues. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this important bipartisan bill.

□ 1730

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

This commonsense legislation provides the Chief Counsel for Advocacy the statutory authority to represent the Nation’s small businesses in the international realm. This timely legislation will provide the office with greater latitude to represent America’s small businesses internationally.

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

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

There is no question that we need to support our small businesses across the country, no matter their location or industry, when they are attempting to break into international commerce.

Today’s bill leverages the unique position and knowledge of the SBA’s Office of Advocacy to amplify the voice of small firms in international settings. Today is an important step to break down international barriers for small entrepreneurs entering into the world of trade.

Finally, I thank the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. COMER), for his diligence on this matter.

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

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 128 the “Small Business Advocacy Improvements Act,” which clarifies the duties of the SBA’s Office of Advocacy.

I support this legislation because, among other things, it mandates the SBA Office of Advocacy to examine small business issues in international economies and authorizes the Office to represent small businesses interests before international entities and foreign governments dealing with regulatory and trade initiatives that affect small businesses.

The Small Business Administration’s Office of Advocacy is an independent voice for small

