

Despite booming economic growth as a result of the American Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, nearly 7 million jobs in America remain unfilled.

Mr. Speaker, I can't tell you how many employers from my district have struggled to find workers with the technical competencies to compete for in-demand, good-paying jobs.

So when it comes to workforce development, we need innovative ideas and partnerships between businesses and institutions of higher education. That is why I introduced the Virtual Apprenticeship Tax Credit Act of 2019, which offers a tax credit to employers who invest in the funding of virtual apprenticeship programs. It is my hope this will open more doors for students from all backgrounds.

When it comes to learning and workforce development, there shouldn't be a one-size-fits-all approach. Put simply, there needs to be more virtual apprenticeship opportunities for our students.

□ 1415

INCLUDE PFAS PROVISIONS IN NDAA

(Ms. TLAIB asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. TLAIB. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support hundreds of communities across America, both rural and urban, that are being forced to endure PFAS contamination.

Every week, we learn more and more about the toxicity and ever-widening scope of this man-made crisis.

Not one but two PFAS sites have been discovered in my own district, the 13th Congressional District, first seeping from the sewers in Melvindale and then at the construction site of the Gordie Howe International Bridge in Detroit.

As a representative of people living in those areas, and from the State with the most PFAS sites in the country, it is my moral obligation to stand before you all today and say time is now for Congress to act. Include provisions to clean up contaminated sites, to stop PFAS from polluting our drinking water in the future, and to protect our servicemembers and first responders in the final NDAA that is on its way.

We have waited long enough to help families whose drinking water is at risk, who have been exposed to these toxic chemicals, and whose future is very much threatened.

INCENTIVIZE INNOVATION TO LOWER HEALTHCARE COSTS

(Mr. KELLER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KELLER. Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no doubt that Americans pay too much for healthcare. Seventy percent of Americans agree that low-

ering prescription drug costs should be a major priority for the legislature.

During August, I participated in a number of healthcare-related roundtables with medical professionals across Pennsylvania's 12th Congressional District. Those healthcare professionals identified a number of ways to help lower prescription drug costs, including patent reform that would help get generics to market quickly and the need to incentivize innovation as a means to find more cures.

As such, I am disturbed that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have introduced a pricing bill that is merely for political talking points and, if enacted, would put this country on the road toward socialized medicine. Rather than incentivizing innovation and patent reform, Democrats have introduced a bill that would increase taxes and stifle innovation while raising drug prices, leading to fewer cures.

The American people have demanded action on lowering healthcare costs. But, Mr. Speaker, socialized medicine is not the answer. It is time to work together on real solutions in the free market to lower prescription drug costs and find cures for all Americans.

CONGRATULATING DIAMONDBACK TRUCK COVERS

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate DiamondBack Truck Covers, a truck bed cover company in Philipsburg, Pennsylvania. DiamondBack was recently awarded the Small Business Administration's Pennsylvania Small Business of the Year Award.

I had the pleasure of traveling back to Philipsburg to present DiamondBack founders Ethan Wendle and Matthew Chverchko with a commendation for this award. Ethan and Matt were also recognized as the SBA Persons of the Year for Pennsylvania.

Ethan and Matt met at Pennsylvania State University. What started out as an engineering class project has turned into a flourishing business.

I am particularly proud that Ethan and Matt chose to plant roots in Philipsburg. This sort of commitment to our local communities is breathing new life into small town USA. It is companies like DiamondBack that are helping small towns bounce back.

The decision to manufacture, market, sell, and ship from Philipsburg is an investment in Pennsylvania's future, in local communities and businesses, and in the people who call the Commonwealth home.

SUPPORT CLEAN ENERGY WEEK

(Mr. CURTIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CURTIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of Clean Energy Week, an opportunity to celebrate bipartisan support for a wide variety of clean energy sources strengthening America's national security while also preserving our environment for future generations.

Environmental stewardship doesn't have to mean making economic sacrifices. Clean energy solutions and jobs are the future for the United States, with clean energy powering more homes and businesses than ever before.

The environment is, and should be, a bipartisan issue. That is why, this week, I am proud, with my friend Congressman LOWENTHAL from California, to offer a resolution in support of congressionally supporting the designation of Clean Energy Week.

I am proud that our effort has already gathered dozens of our colleagues, bipartisan, on both sides of the aisle. This goes to show that we can work across the aisle to be better stewards of this Earth. I plan to continue pursuit of these positive bipartisan solutions in the future.

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, September 24, 2019.
Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
The Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on September 24, 2019, at 11:33 a.m.:

That the Senate passed S. 1340.

That the Senate passed without amendment H.R. 4285.

With best wishes, I am,

Sincerely,

CHERYL L. JOHNSON.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 3 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 20 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1501

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CUELLAR) at 3 o'clock and 1 minute p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair

will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or votes objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

The House will resume proceedings on postponed questions at a later time.

FIRST RESPONDERS PASSPORT ACT OF 2019

Mr. LEVIN of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2229) to waive the passport fees for first responders proceeding abroad to aid a foreign country suffering from a natural disaster, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.
The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2229

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 “First Responders Passport Act of 2019”.

SEC. 2. PASSPORTS FOR FIRST RESPONDERS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (a) of section 1 of the Act of June 4, 1920 (22 U.S.C. 214; 41 Stat. 750; commonly referred to as the “Passport Act of 1920”), is amended, in the third sentence, by inserting after “to attend a funeral or memorial service for such member;” the following: “at the discretion of the Secretary, from an individual, including a volunteer, who is operating under a contract, grant, or cooperative agreement with the United States Government to proceed abroad within the first seven days after a natural disaster to aid a foreign country suffering from such natural disaster;”.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after the end of the first full fiscal year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State shall submit to the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate a report on the number of waivers of fees for the execution and issuance of passports to first responders under section 1 of the Act of June 4, 1920, as amended by subsection (a) of this section, for such fiscal year.

SEC. 3. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.

The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, shall be determined by reference to the latest statement titled “Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation” for this Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, provided that such statement has been submitted prior to the vote on passage.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LEVIN of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include in the RECORD extraneous material on H.R. 2229.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, let me start by thanking the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) for his hard work on this legislation. This is a good bill that passed the House in the 114th Congress, and I am glad we are considering an updated version of it now.

USAID-supported search and rescue teams have played an essential role in the aftermath of many overseas natural disasters, including earthquakes in Nepal, Haiti, Japan, and New Zealand. Just this past month, search and rescue units from Virginia were deployed to the Bahamas to assist the victims of Hurricane Dorian.

These first responders provide specialized capabilities and demonstrate our commitment to international partners during their times of need. They put their lives on the line to help people around the world who are in need, and by doing so, they demonstrate the compassion of the American people.

This bill would authorize the Secretary of State, at their discretion, to waive passport fees for the brave Americans who mobilize quickly as part of a U.S. Government-supported team to help other countries when a natural disaster strikes.

This is a commonsense fix to help ensure the rapid deployment of Americans who risk life and limb to help other countries in their times of need. It is a good bill that I am proud to support.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in doing so, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the First Responders Passport Act, and I thank the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) for introducing this bill.

Americans who answer the call to service in response to disasters abroad are some of the best that America has to offer. Often first on the scene when calamity strikes, our fire and rescue teams are the embodiment of the generosity of the American people. Their commitment and sacrifice earn immense goodwill toward our Nation.

This bill will help our first responders obtain the overseas travel documentation that they need in a quick and cost-effective way.

For these reasons, it deserves our unanimous support, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEVIN of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. McCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT), a senior member of the Foreign Affairs Committee and the author of the First Responders Passport Act.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. McCAUL) for yielding, and I rise today

in support of H.R. 2229, the First Responders Passport Act, legislation I introduced along with Congressman BOYLE to exempt first responders operating on behalf of the U.S. Government from passport fees. This legislation is especially timely as we just witnessed Hurricane Dorian's destruction in the Bahamas.

Currently, USAID contracts with first responders to deploy them abroad for natural disasters, like Hurricane Dorian. For example, every 5 years, USAID awards contracts to local fire departments that have highly trained, internationally certified urban search and rescue teams, allowing USAID to have these specialists on call. A team of these first responders deployed to the Bahamas as part of our recent relief efforts there.

To arrive at disaster zones in time, these teams are required to be able to deploy the day a disaster strikes. Consequently, they must maintain an active passport while they are under contract.

Unfortunately, volunteers or other members of these teams that are not deployed by a local or State government have to do so at their own expense, even though they could potentially be traveling on government business. My legislation allows the Secretary of State to waive passport fees for them and other similarly situated individuals.

Brave first responders sacrifice time away from their families to go to disaster zones on behalf of the U.S. Government and represent our Nation to people who have lost everything. As part of an official U.S. response, the Federal Government ought to cover the first responders' costs.

That is why I am pleased that we have been able to work in a bipartisan manner, Democrats and Republicans working together to bring this legislation to the House floor, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to the BURMA Act, legislation that Chairman ENGEL and I introduced to sanction the Burmese military for its gross human rights violations against the Rohingya.

This legislation has already passed the House twice as part of this year's and last year's NDAA, the National Defense Authorization Act. I am pleased that we can consider it by itself today.

Mr. Speaker, 2 years ago, the Burmese military drove over 700,000 Rohingya, many of them children, out of Rakhine State and into Bangladesh. This brutal, systematic, premeditated campaign inflicted unspeakable horrors on the Rohingya, including barbaric killings, gang rapes, and the burning of hundreds and hundreds of villages.

As a clearer picture emerged over time, the mounting evidence led the