

provided to agencies by request on a reimbursable and transparent basis.

I support the commonsense bill before us to modernize and improve the functioning of the Federal Government.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 5901, the Information Technology Modernization Centers of Excellence Program Act. This bill will help our government catch up with private-sector innovations by equipping agencies to take advantage of modern information technology solutions.

Federal agencies remain challenged by inefficient, costly, and unwieldy legacy technology systems that do not adequately deliver citizen services and allow agencies to achieve their legally mandated missions.

For example, the Government Accountability Office has reported that, between 2010 and 2017, the Federal Government spent over \$450 billion just maintaining outdated legacy IT systems. That is over 70 percent of the government's entire IT budget.

There is increasingly less and less Federal IT funding available for new agency modernization projects. The government needs to take advantage of the cutting-edge technology solutions already being used by the private sector.

Recognizing the need for a different approach to transition large Federal agency technology projects, the Centers of Excellence were established by the Trump administration at the General Services Administration to help agencies overcome persistent modernization challenges.

These challenges include identifying the best new technology solutions, purchasing that technology, and then integrating that technology into an agency's unique operations and workflows. The GSA Centers of Excellence teams serve as change management consultants that bring private-sector best practices to Federal agency technology challenges.

By adopting commercially available solutions, in conjunction with deliberate enterprise-wide transformation planning, agencies can effectively transition into modern operating environments. By improving the operational efficiency of our Federal agency programs and mission, we can save taxpayer dollars.

While modernizing government is good for the taxpayer, the Centers of Excellence also deliver an additional benefit to Americans by bringing a central focus to improving agency delivery on constituent services.

H.R. 5901 promises to make the citizens' engagement with our government programs more intuitive and straightforward, like an engagement with a modern business.

I am well aware of the challenges faced by veterans, senior citizens, and

businesses when interacting with the Federal Government. I am sure that my colleagues are as well.

The current pandemic has shown how critical it is for all Americans to be able to effectively and reliably interact with government agencies. It is time the Federal Government leveraged modern cloud computing systems, data-driven analytic capabilities, artificial intelligence, and modern customer experience tools to offer the highest level of service possible.

H.R. 5901 will give congressional backing and ensure regular oversight of the existing GSA program in order to accomplish these goals.

By giving legal authority to the program, we are also ensuring the program's stability through the next two Presidential administrations, which is critical to gaining agency buy-in and having the time to realize the benefits of this new modernization approach.

The Congressional Budget Office's review of this bill found that it will have no budgetary impact, which shows that there are still legislative opportunities to modernize the government without spending additional taxpayer funds.

I hope the House Oversight and Reform Committee and this Congress can continue to work together on similar legislative reforms to bring our government into the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues for their bipartisan work on this bill. I encourage my colleagues to support H.R. 5901, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. KHANNA), the author of this bill.

Mr. KHANNA. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman CONNOLLY for his leadership on this, on FITARA, and on so many efforts to bring technology to our government. I thank the gentlewoman from West Virginia and the bipartisan committee that has helped bring this legislation to the floor, including the majority and minority staffs.

Mr. Speaker, we worked with the White House Office of Innovation and Matt Lira on this. The idea was very simple. We in the Federal Government should have cutting-edge technology in our Federal agencies. As a representative of Silicon Valley, it has always perplexed me why the world's greatest institution, the strongest institution, the United States Government, can't adopt the latest technology.

What this bill does is says that we need to have digital expertise in the General Service Administration, about 50 to 150 individuals who will help all of our Federal agencies adopt cloud computing, adopt artificial intelligence, adopt the latest technology modernization and infrastructure, adopt the best digital practices for customer service.

We want our Federal Government to be user friendly. We want our Federal Government to use all the tools of technology to be competitive, to be the leader in the world. That is what this bill does.

I want to applaud the bipartisan spirit in which this bill came to the floor. It was originally the White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows who was the cosponsor of the legislation. I thank him, as well as the cosponsor, now the ranking member, Representative RICE. On the Senate side, we have bipartisan commitment from the leadership of Senator PORTMAN and Senator MAGGIE HASSAN. So I am hopeful that this will actually become law and allow us to continue to compete.

I just want to end by thanking Geo Saba, a staff member who was extraordinarily helpful on this; as well as, again, the committee staff that has been excellent to work with; and, of course, Chairwoman CAROLYN MALONEY, who helped bring this to the floor.

Mrs. MILLER. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan government reform bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I think this is a good bill. I think as Mr. KHANNA indicated, it adds to the corpus of information technology legislation where we are trying to modernize the Federal Government; we are trying to retire legacy systems; we are trying to move to the cloud for cyber reasons, for efficiency reasons, and to be of better service to the American people.

I think this is another piece in that mosaic, and I urge its passage by our colleagues here in the House.

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 Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5901, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CHAI SUTHAMMANONT REMEMBRANCE ACT OF 2020

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 7340) to ensure that personal protective equipment and other equipment and supplies needed to fight coronavirus are provided to employees required to return to Federal offices, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 7340

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 "Chai Suthammanont Remembrance Act of 2020".

SEC. 2. TELEWORK, LEAVE, AND RETURNING TO WORK FOR FEDERAL EMPLOYEES.

(a) ISSUANCE OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES BY AGENCIES.—Not later than 30 days before

the date on which an agency plans to reopen a facility and after consultation with the Chief Human Capital Officer and director of administration or the equivalent, the head of an agency shall publish on the website of that agency a reopening plan that details the procedures and policies related to sending employees back to workstations during the covered period that includes the following:

(1) The personal protective equipment that will be provided by the agency, the additional cleaning protocols to be implemented, and efforts to ensure social distancing at worksites.

(2) The actions the agency will take to protect employees who are required to work in locations outside of Federal office buildings for activities such as audits and inspections.

(3) The requirements that members of the public must meet in order to enter Federal office spaces.

(4) A description of the proper contingencies for employees who have a high risk of contracting coronavirus.

(5) Ensures the continuity of operations, including plans to reverse reopening measures if there is a resurgence in coronavirus cases in certain geographic areas.

(b) **INSPECTORS GENERAL REVIEW.**—Not later than 6 months after the date of the enactment of this section, the inspector general for each agency shall submit to the Committee on Oversight and Reform of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a review on whether that agency has provided adequate personal protective equipment for the employees who are returning to a Federal office location for the agency and published the policies and procedures required pursuant to subsection (a).

(c) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

(1) **AGENCY.**—The term “agency” has the meaning given that term in section 551 of title 5, United States Code.

(2) **COVERED PERIOD.**—The term “covered period” means a period during which a nationwide declaration of a public health emergency by the Secretary of Health and Human Services under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 247d) is in effect.

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 Virginia (Mr. **CONNOLLY**) and the gentlewoman from West Virginia (Mrs. **MILLER**) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. **CONNOLLY**. 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 about the measure before us.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, the Chai Suthammanont Remembrance Act would require each Federal agency to publish online a plan to reopen the Federal office building at least 30 days prior to the return of their workforce. The legislation also requires agency inspectors general to report on whether their agencies have, in fact, complied with the provisions in this bill and provided adequate personal protective equipment for their employees returning to office spaces.

This bill is named after my constituent who tragically lost his life to coronavirus on May 26, 2020. Chai's picture is behind me. Chai was a real human being. He wasn't a statistic. He left behind a family. He is survived by four sons, his wife, and four grandchildren. He succumbed on May 26, 2020.

Chai immigrated to the United States from Thailand when he was 17. Throughout his life he was known for helping others.

When he first came to our country, he landed in the restaurant industry at a famous jazz club in Greenwich Village in New York City, where he made it among the first restaurants to offer health insurance to its employees.

After retiring from that industry, Chai moved to the National Capitol Region and returned to work as a Federal employee in the Marine Corps Community Services Child Development Center in Quantico, Virginia. Chai wanted to continue giving back to his adopted country. He was a proud American citizen.

Chai was also a beloved employee working in the development center's kitchen, preparing meals for the children of our Marine families. He developed a unique handshake for each kid in the daycare, making each child feel special and included.

At the beginning of this terrible pandemic, Chai's workplace was not enforcing or taking proper precautions to protect its workers. On April 27, Chai worked his last full shift at the daycare kitchen as one of his coworkers coughed repeatedly and looked very ill. There was no protective equipment for the other employees, including Chai.

Sadly, soon after that, Chai was informed that the coworker had, indeed, tested positive for coronavirus. Almost exactly 1 month later, after 13 days on a ventilator, Chai died on May 26.

Let me be clear: This was an avoidable death. Had there been protocols in place, had there been PPE in place and available to employees like Chai, Chai would still be alive today, in my view.

Chai's widow, Christina, has worked with my office to make sure this never happens to anybody else again.

I named the bill after Chai because, although the provisions in this bill can no longer help him, they can help the millions of Federal and contract workers who will reenter the Federal work spaces across the United States.

This legislation is designed to save lives and protect those who serve the American people.

We, as Members of Congress, have an absolute obligation to protect the Federal workforce that keeps our country running, keeps our country safe. We must ensure that Federal employees have the most accurate and up-to-date information regarding agencies' reopening plans.

Currently, Federal agencies are failing to communicate with employees across the board and other stakeholders about their coronavirus practices and policies. As some agencies begin calling employees back to Federal office buildings, many civil servants are receiving incomplete or unclear instructions, leading to fear and uncertainty about health.

I represent the third largest number of Federal employees of any congressional district in America, but there are Federal employees in every Federal congressional district. This bill matters and ought to matter to every one of us and our constituents.

I refuse to sit idly by and risk more and more of our Federal workforce being forced back to office buildings under superficial plans with zero accountability. This bill simply includes the commonsense provisions taken directly from the best practices recommendations of the Government Accountability Office to communicate effectively with the workforce and to ensure they have adequate PPE. The Trump Office of Management and Budget had no concerns with this bill.

The least we can do for our Federal employees is to ensure the Federal agencies they work for are being transparent with their plans so that there is a level of reassurance and security before they are called back physically to the workplace.

I wholeheartedly support this bill dedicated to my constituent Chai, and I encourage every one of my colleagues to join me in doing the same.

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

Mrs. **MILLER**. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the Chai Suthammanont Remembrance Act is well-intentioned legislation.

First, let me send my deepest condolences to Chai's family. He sounds like such a beloved person. I am sure Chai is greatly missed.

Each and every COVID-19-related tragedy is a stark reminder of the preciousness of life. America has faced astonishing challenges over the last 6 months with this global struggle.

As the Nation's largest employer, the Federal Government has offices and employees across the Nation in every State and territory. There are unprecedented challenges facing our Federal workforce and the management of our government's many facilities. Every single State and territory is working overtime to operate under a disruptive emergency declaration.

The work of our Federal agencies' diverse workforce is more critical than ever, and they are working around the

clock. It is critical that the Federal agencies have stepped up to the plate to answer the calls for help.

President Trump and his team at the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of Personnel Management should be commended for issuing timely directives that gave agencies the necessary guidance and flexibility to accomplish their missions.

The requirements of this bill may duplicate planned administration and agency actions. Therefore, the bill could have benefited from further committee work to avoid potential duplication. However, H.R. 7340 is well intentioned, and I support governmentwide transparency.

I have heard my colleague, Mr. CONNOLLY, speak passionately about Mr. Chai, about his character and his passion for working with children, and my thoughts and prayers are with his family, friends, and colleagues that knew him so well.

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

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, Mrs. MILLER, for her kind remarks, and I certainly know they will be appreciated by his widow, Christina.

Mr. Speaker, we have no further speakers on this side, and I am prepared to close.

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

Mrs. MILLER. Mr. Speaker, I have no further comments on this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I urge my friends in the House, on a bipartisan basis, to join with me in honoring Chai and preventing further deaths and further infections from COVID-19 within the Federal workforce and the Federal contract workforce. This is a prudent measure, and, as I said, President Trump's OMB does not oppose this bill.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 7340, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

COVID PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE, AND EFFECTIVE PLANNING FOR ADVANCED REQUIREMENTS BY THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH ACT OF 2020

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 7496) to require Federal agencies to submit plans for responding to any resurgence of COVID-19, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 7496

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 "COVID Preparedness, Response, and Effective Planning for Advanced Requirements by the Executive Branch Act of 2020" or the "COVID PREPARE Act of 2020".

SEC. 2. COVID-19 RESURGENCE PLAN.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the head of each agency shall submit to Congress an initial report detailing an action plan, informed by research and best practices learned from the onset of COVID-19 and previous presidentially declared emergencies, for addressing the needs and mitigating and eliminating the risks and challenges associated with any resurgence in COVID-19 cases, that includes—

(1) agency priorities for preparing for and responding to any resurgence of COVID-19, including continuity of operations and fulfilling the mission of the agency;

(2) measurable goals specific to priorities and a time line for addressing each priority;

(3) anticipated challenges to addressing priorities and how the agency will address such challenges;

(4) how the agency will consult with Congress, the public, State and municipal governments, and relevant stakeholders while working remotely; and

(5) how the agency plans to issue relevant guidance to entities under the jurisdiction of the agency.

(b) SUBSEQUENT REPORTS.—Not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and quarterly thereafter until the President ends the declared emergency, the head of each agency shall submit to Congress a report that provides an update of the details submitted in the plan under subsection (a), including—

(1) the status of each priority;

(2) an explanation for any goal that has not been met within the specified time frame; and

(3) any changes or updates to the plan.

(c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) AGENCY.—The term "agency" has the meaning given that term in section 551 of title 5, United States Code.

(2) STATE.—The term "State" means each of the several States, the District of Columbia, each commonwealth, territory, or possession of the United States, and each federally recognized Indian Tribe.

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 Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) and the gentlewoman from West Virginia (Mrs. MILLER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and in-

clude extraneous material on the measure before us.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I thank Representatives BRAD SCHNEIDER and JOHN KATKO for their strong bipartisan work on this good-government bill.

Reflecting back on the outbreak of the pandemic, I think we can all agree that our Nation and the Federal Government were not prepared for what lay ahead. Conflicting safety and work-from-home guidelines caused confusion across the Federal workforce. We didn't have a clear understanding of how the virus spread or how best to respond to it, so agencies managing offices and priorities across the country were left to make their own best decisions as they saw it. Many agencies were not telework-ready, and we did not grasp the sheer length of time that this pandemic would last, let alone plan for it.

Now with the winter months approaching, the projections are grim. In June, the University of Washington School of Medicine predicted 200,000 U.S. deaths by October, a number we had already passed by September 22. Their model now predicts, sadly, the death rate will more than double by the end of this year. In all likelihood, the worst is still to come. But this time we can and must be prepared.

To make sure the Federal Government is ready for the challenges ahead, the COVID PREPARE Act would require each Federal agency submit to Congress an initial action plan for addressing and managing any resurgence of coronavirus cases. The plans would use the important lessons learned since the onset of the coronavirus crisis to develop data-driven blueprints for anticipating and addressing any resurgence. The bill also would require agencies to provide quarterly progress reports to Congress.

Agencies should already be engaging in the strategic evidence-based planning required by this bill, so compliance ought not to be difficult. Adding this important step would maximize the impact of these plans by ensuring transparency and accountability through oversight.

It is more urgent than ever that Federal agencies ensure the responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars while protecting their workforces and the most effective pandemic response possible by committing to a sound and transparent planning and preparedness process.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support of this thoughtful bill as a complement to the bill we just passed, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on H.R. 7496, the COVID PREPARE Act of 2020.