

States because of the use of such goods, services, or technology in contravention of a United States or United Nations sanction; or

“(B) knowingly, directly or indirectly, provides training, advice, or other services or assistance, or engages in significant financial transactions, relating to any such goods, services, or technology in contravention of such sanction.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ESPAILLAT) and the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include any extraneous material on H.R. 4802.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this measure and want to thank the authors, Mr. WILSON and Mr. DEUTCH, for their hard work and leadership.

Since its establishment in 1984, the State Department's Rewards for Justice Program has awarded more than \$150 million to those who help the United States Government bring terrorists and criminals to justice.

Over the years, we have expanded the scope of this effort, offering rewards related to a wider range of crimes and ensnaring more people who mean Americans harm. This legislation would add more and more tools to the toolbox.

This bill was inspired by a former Syrian diplomat and defector named Bassam Barabandi. As an employee of the Syrian Embassy here in Washington, D.C., he worked with antiregime activists to provide passports to critics of Bashar al-Assad, and for years after his defection, Barabandi supplied the United States Government with information on Syrian oligarchs close to the Assad regime. This includes information on Samer Foz, who was ultimately the target of American sanctions.

We want to incentivize more people like Mr. Barabandi to come forward with information that will ultimately enhance compliance with the U.S. and international sanctions, increase confidence in the rule of law, and bring to justice criminals and rogue regimes seeking to circumvent U.S. law.

This bill expands the Rewards for Justice Program by authorizing rewards for individuals who provide information on those who evade the United States' and the United Nations' sanctions.

This is a smart bill that builds on a successful program. I am pleased to support it, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of another bill I introduced with my friend and subcommittee colleague Chairman TED DEUTCH from Florida, H.R. 4802.

This bill will expand the Rewards for Justice Program at the State Department to authorize rewards for individuals coming forward with information on sanctions evasion practices.

The bill was inspired by Bassam Barabandi, a courageous Syrian patriot and former diplomat at the Syrian Embassy here in Washington who worked with the antiregime activists to provide passports to critics of the criminal Assad regime, promoting the best interests of the people of Syria.

For years after his defection, Barabandi lobbied the U.S. Government and provided detailed information on Syrian oligarchs close to Assad and their sanctions evasion practices, including information on Samer Foz, who was ultimately sanctioned by the Treasury last year. He has courageously authored “The Blacklist,” which fully documents those who repress the talented people of Syria.

Barabandi's case highlighted the need to create a clearer mechanism to incentivize individuals to come forward with this kind of vital information. H.R. 4802 will do just that. It will ultimately enhance compliance with U.S. and international sanctions, increase confidence in the rule of law, and bring criminals and rogue regimes seeking to circumvent U.S. law to justice.

For sanctions to be successful, we must have the best information on their ability to hit their intended targets. We must pass many sanctions bills in this body, but it is far easier to pass a sanctions bill than it is to enforce it.

Expanding the Rewards for Justice Program will allow us to acquire information on illegal activity that supports the regimes of Iran, North Korea, and other rogue states from the grassroots. Better information equals better enforcement on behalf of the persecuted persons of those countries. Better enforcement equals better results.

We should pass this bill and help make sure that the sanctions policies are as effective as possible.

Mr. Speaker, there being no further speakers, again, I thank Bassam Barabandi for his courage as a patriot for the people of Syria in the face of the evil Assad regime. He is currently awaiting a decision from USCIS regarding his request for asylum in the United States, and I hope and pray that the Department of Homeland Security rewards this hero of democracy for the people of Syria for his bravery.

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

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, let me again thank Mr. WILSON and Mr. DEUTCH for bringing this bill forward. I

urge a “yes” vote, 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. ESPAILLAT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4802.

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.

TROPICAL FOREST AND CORAL REEF CONSERVATION REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2020

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 7954) to reauthorize the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Act of 1998.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 7954

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 “Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Reauthorization Act of 2020”.

SEC. 2. REAUTHORIZATION.

Section 806(d) of the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 2431d(d)) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

“(9) \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2021.

“(10) \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2022.

“(11) \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2023.

“(12) \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2024.

“(13) \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2025.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ESPAILLAT) and the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include any extraneous material on H.R. 7954.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support this measure brought forward by my friend from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT), to provide continued funding for the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Act, what we call the TFCA, for fiscal years 2021 through 2025.

The purpose of the TFCA is to offer developing countries the option to direct a portion of their debt payments to local forest and coral reef conservation activities instead of making those payments to the U.S. Government.

Since the TFCA was enacted in 1998, it made real differences in efforts to

preserve and protect these fragile ecosystems. The State Department has reached 20 separate bilateral agreements with 14 countries, resulting in over \$339 million in long-term commitment to conserve tropical forests.

This bipartisan legislation takes significant strides to build stronger relationships with countries around the world, while ensuring that irreplaceable tropical forests and coral reefs are protected and preserved for future generations.

I am pleased to support this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 7954, the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Reauthorization Act of 2020, led by Representative STEVE CHABOT from Ohio and BRAD SHERMAN from California.

Congress first enacted this important legislation in 1998. The legislation allows eligible developing countries to restructure certain debt owed to the U.S. Government and, in turn, generates additional revenue to support tropical forest or coral reef conservation projects. These agreements also reinvest in locally led civil society and conservation organizations that take ownership of this critical restoration work.

According to The Nature Conservancy, agreements under this program have saved more than 67 million acres of tropical forest in countries such as Botswana, Brazil, the Philippines, and Indonesia.

Since first enacted, the Tropical Forest Conservation Act has generated almost \$340 million in local currency for tropical forest conservation projects. These are substantial investments in the health of our world's most critical forests and an investment in future generations.

I urge my colleagues to support this important measure.

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT), the sponsor of the bill.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I thank the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. ESPAILLAT) for their leadership on this legislation here today and previous to this.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 7954, the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Reauthorization Act of 2020. It is bipartisan legislation that I introduced with my Democratic colleague and friend from California, BRAD SHERMAN, as a companion to legislation that Senator PORTMAN introduced previously in the Senate.

I want to thank Senator PORTMAN. He has been a longtime leader on this topic, and it makes a lot of sense. It is

really common sense. It helps so many people all across the globe.

Tropical forests and coral reefs are some of the most biologically diverse and environmentally important ecosystems anywhere. Today, however, whether it is deforestation or pollution or overfishing or some other cause, these vital natural resources are threatened across the globe.

Now, many tropical forests and coral reefs are located in the developing world where economic realities can often get in the way of the conservation. It is in the best interest of the whole world to protect and responsibly manage these resources. That is why I introduced H.R. 7954.

This legislation builds on our work on the Tropical Forest Conservation Reauthorization Act of 2018 and the Tropical Forest Conservation Act back in 1998, so this is 22 years ago.

Back in 1998, we set up a debt forgiveness program under which the U.S. forgives a debt owed to us by a developing nation in exchange for that country making investments in conservation work to sustain its critical ecosystems.

Agreements under this program also strengthen local economies by supporting sustainable development of these resources as well as civil society groups in partner nations that conduct conservation works.

And this program has proven results. Since 1998, as was mentioned, the U.S. has used it to conserve 67 million acres—think of that, 67 million acres—of tropical forests. Further, by assisting developing countries to properly manage and sustainably develop these resources, the program follows the old adage of teaching a man to fish.

With these benefits in mind, I am proud to say that our legislation has received the support of Conservation International, the World Wildlife Fund, the Wildlife Conservation Society, and The Nature Conservancy, among others.

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Finally, our legislation sets a sharp contrast with what the Chinese development model is. Through the Belt and Road Initiative, for example, China has offered elites in developing countries flashy or get-rich-quick schemes and projects, often with little or no regard for the local environment. Citizens in these countries are taken advantage of.

H.R. 7954 keeps one more tool in the State Department's toolbox to help convince developing countries to choose a sustainable, Western model of development that stacks up very favorably with China's model by respecting the country's ecosystem and respecting its people.

Passing this bill, H.R. 7954, extends a highly successful conservation program and helps counter China's pig in a poke development model; therefore, I would urge my colleagues to support this legislation. Again, I thank Mr. WILSON and Mr. ESPAILLAT.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers,

and I yield myself the balance of my time for the purpose of closing.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative STEVE CHABOT, who is a proven champion for conservation and for ecosystems beneficial to countries around the world for offering this measure. With the expanded authority to use debt-for-nature agreements to target tropical coral reef restoration, there is much more work to be done.

This bill will ensure that the policy objectives and programs outlined in the Republican-led, bipartisan legislation enacted in December 2018 will be fully operationalized. This is a commonsense approach that reduces eligible countries' debt burdens while reinvesting those resources in local tropical forests and coral reef conservation.

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

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, once again, I thank Mr. CHABOT for his leadership.

Mr. Speaker, I also would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. ELIOT ENGEL, the chair of this committee, for his many years of distinguished service in Congress ably representing his district, the State of New York, and our country here in the Halls of Congress while presiding and leading the Foreign Affairs Committee. Today is a testament of all the great work that he has done across the aisle with many Members who have, of course, contributed tremendously to the dialogue.

Mr. Speaker, I urge a "yes" vote, 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. ESPAILLAT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 7954.

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.

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, November 18, 2020.

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 November 18, 2020, at 11:50 a.m.:

That the Senate passed S. 4902.

That the Senate passed S. 2216.

That the Senate passed without amendment H.R. 1668.

That the Senate passed without amendment H.R. 5901.